John Wesley

THE LIVING WESLEY.

BY THE

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"CHURCH ORGANISATIONS: PRIMITIVE AND PROTESTANT,"

ETC. ETC.

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PREFACE.

UNDER the title, *The Living Wesley, as he was in his Youth and in his Prime*, a considerable portion of this volume was published some years ago, first in this country, and, somewhat later, in the United States, the American edition being graced by an introduction from the pen of my friend Dr. Hurst, now Bishop Hurst, of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The special purpose of the book was described in the Preface as being "to do something towards furnishing a true portraiture of John Wesley, in his human affections, in his intellectual character, and in his gifts and power as a preacher." At the same time I expressed my opinion that "even after Mr. Tyerman's diligence there is yet room for an original and standard life of the Methodist Reformer, at once shorter and in some respects more satisfactory, clearer and more discriminating as to some matters of primary importance."

I intimated that I felt myself obliged, through increasing pressure of work, to relinquish the hope I had long cherished of being able, in some degree, to supply this want, but offered *The Living Wesley* as a contribution towards what I felt to be needful. Since that time I have published a volume on *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*, which may perhaps be regarded as another contribution towards the same object.

I have, in the meantime, been frequently solicited to enlarge my study of *The Living Wesley* into a duly proportioned biography, embracing not only the youth and prime of Wesley, but his whole course and life-work. The continued pressure of other work, from which there has been no escape, has prevented me from doing this. The call for a new edition of *The Living Wesley*, however, coinciding with the centenary year of Wesley's death, has led to the suggestion being urged upon me, so to enlarge the new edition as to make it a study of Wesley in all the great phases and stages of his life-development and of his characteristic work, as a national evangelist and as the founder of Methodism, and specially to connect it at the same time with the centenary epoch which just now is

recalling public attention to his life and work. I have attempted to do this in the pages which follow. Narrow limits both of space and of time—for the volume must still be small, and the weeks available for accomplishing my task have been few—have not allowed me to do all that I could have wished. I have, however, extended the scope and much enlarged the contents of the original volume. Throughout, it has been closely revised; some portion has been not only enlarged, but in part rewritten; several new chapters have been added; and to the whole there has been appended a Supplementary Chapter, making Part V of the volume, in which a sketch is given of "The Progress of Universal Methodism since the death of Wesley."

I am aware that, since the publication of *The Living Wesley* in its original form, more than one valuable biography of Wesley has been published, and in particular two by Wesleyan ministers. Neither the small biography by the Rev. R. Green, however, nor the larger and fuller one by the Rev. J. Telford, resembles in scope or character the present volume. No other book exhibits in all its stages, as distinctly as this does, the singularly interesting development of

character and opinion in the case of Wesley, by which, under Divine influence, he came to be the revivalist of evangelical doctrine, the great awakener of souls, the master-theologian, and the founder of a new religious community. No other book shows, with equal distinctness and completeness of outline, what Wesley was in his proper idiosyncrasy, with his bright gifts and faculties, but also with his weaknesses of temperament —these weaknesses being some of them what would have been least expected; or how the natural, College-bred Wesley was strengthened and spiritualised, was quickened and inspired, so as to become the hero, sage, and saint of his ripe maturity and glorious later years. In no other book is his special character as a preacher, and the secret of his awakening power, often so overwhelming, made the subject of so careful and complete an analysis. Nor is there any other in which his intellectual characteristics are the subject of so detailed and comprehensive a study. In respect of these important particulars, this volume stands alone as a portraiture of *The Living Wesley* as his contemporaries saw and felt him. With the study thus furnished of his living and moving self, there is in the present volume incorporated and interlaced such a sketch of his

history and life-work as, though comparatively slight, may, I hope, entitle this book, as a whole, to be regarded as, in its kind and degree, not unworthy to take its place among the shorter biographies of Wesley, as his 'Centenary Life.' The Supplementary Chapter, compendious and brief as it necessarily is, yet furnishes such a view of the progress of universal Methodism during the last hundred years as is not elsewhere to be found.

JAMES H. RIGG.

New Year's Day, 1891.

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THE LIVING WESLEY.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

WESLEY'S BIOGRAPHERS AND CRITICS.

THERE are some questions as to Wesley's character and the nature of his influence still unsettled; indeed, as I shall show, he is imperfectly understood as yet. But there can be no question as to the immense spread and depth of the motive energies which he has been the means of originating within the nationalities of England, with all her Colonies, and of the United States, not to speak of the critical and determinative influence which has been exercised by Methodism upon the Protestant thought and life of France, and even of Germany. No single man for centuries has moved the world as Wesley has moved it; since Luther, no man. No Protestant Church at this day counts so many adherents as the Methodist family of Churches; no Church has operated so powerfully as a ferment of life among all the other Churches.

If these things are so—and now-a-days hardly any

man will venture to deny the truth, at least in general, of what I have stated—it is no wonder that the present age has waked up to an eager curiosity as to the character of the man, the secret of his power, the meaning of his work, the history of his life. Long ago Dr. Southey perceived the capabilities of this theme; historian, man of letters, and poet-laureate as he was, he treated the character and life of Wesley with a respect and ability worthy alike of the subject and the writer. It was inevitable that such a philosophic Churchman as Southey, such a semi-rationalistically-orthodox Anglican, should commit serious errors in his attempt to portray and estimate such a character as that of Wesley. It was equally inevitable, with scarcely any other sources of information in addition to Wesley's works than the *Arminian Magazine* and the very imperfect Lives of Wesley which had been published by some of his over-worked, hurried and driven, and, as literary men and historians, untrained itinerant helpers, the best Life which Southey or any other writer could produce at that time should be defective and incorrect. He had no access whatever to the special sources of information without which no Life of such a man could be justly or adequately written, and which it was as yet too soon after the death of Wesley to expect to be given to the world. But, with all its faults, the work produced by Southey was so beautiful in its style, and so skilful in its use of the materials at his disposal, that almost up to this day it has remained—now for much more than half a century—the one biography by which Wesley has been known to the world. Men have not read the Lives written by Whitehead, Coke, and Moore,—for

many years, indeed, these have been out of print, and it would be an injustice to the name and memory of Wesley to reprint any of them,—but Southey's Life of the Methodist reformer has been in every important and well-chosen library, whether of a public institution or of a private mansion; and its fascination has not failed to secure for it successive generations of readers.

Wesley's Life, indeed, as written by the Tory historian, reviewer, biographist, and poet, as written in the best style of one who was a master both of the English language and of the biographer's art—became at once an English classic, and, what is much more, raised the character and memory of Wesley at once, in the circles of men of high and thoughtful culture, to a place of eminence and respect often rising to veneration. Nor was it only to Wesley that Southey did, according to his light, generous justice; he did justice also to the humble but great and noble men, such as John Nelson and the soldier Haime, who were Wesley's early and chief lay-helpers. He showed these men in their true light, as manliest among men and saintliest among saints; as men of no less steadfast power than fervid zeal; as among the heroes of the holy Christian warfare. Thus the total effect of Southey's *Life of Wesley* was to elevate the Methodism of Wesley and his followers to a place of permanent interest and honour before their countrymen, and, we may say, before the world.

Southey, indeed, as I have intimated, misapprehended some leading particulars in Wesley's character, and accordingly misconstrued broadly, in certain directions, his motives and his conduct. He conceived ambition to be the leading natural feature of his

character, and to have powerfully prompted and controlled him through life—the ambition of the ruler and the statesman; he resolved, moreover, the wonderful effects of his preaching into the natural results of potent and penetrating oratory, managed with consummate skill, by a master alike of speech and of the art of turning circumstances and situations to account. For these fundamental errors he was most ably and severely searched and called to account by the Rev. Richard Watson, in his well-known *Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley;* and his misconceptions in this respect have also been effectually disposed of very recently by Miss Wedgwood, in her essay on Wesley,—Miss Wedgwood having, apparently, never read Mr. Watson's *Observations.*[1] Still, with all its errors, and notwithstanding its necessary defects—notwithstanding its evident Anglican prejudices and its pervasive taint of rationalistic sense-dogmatism and spiritual insusceptibility—Southey's work is so interesting, so genial, so candid, so evidently sincere, and even generous, in its spirit, that it ought ever to be regarded by the followers of Wesley as the work, not of an enemy, but of one who meant honestly and kindly, and who has really, on the whole, done the office of a friend. Southey himself, indeed, became convinced that he had wronged Wesley's memory and misunderstood his character; and if he had lived to bring out the new edition which he had in contemplation, he would have made a correction of his leading errors. Whether Mr. Watson's criticism had any share in bringing about this change, I know not. Southey's

[1] *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the 18th Century.* By Julia Wedgwood. London: Macmillan.

own account of it, given to the late learned and amiable James Nichols, *littérateur* and printer, of Hoxton Square, in an autograph letter, of which a *fac-simile*, very interesting to look at, if it were only for the elegance and neatness of the writing, is engraved in Dr. Smith's *History of Methodism*,[1] states that Mr. Alexander Knox, in "a long and admirable paper" (which is printed at length in the recent editions of Southey's biography), had "convinced him that he was mistaken" in charging Wesley with personal ambition. The date of this letter was 17th August, 1835. He was at that time making some preparations for a new edition of the Life, and he stated that it was "his intention to incorporate in it whatever new information has been brought forward by subsequent biographers, and, of course, to correct every error that had been pointed out, or that he himself could discover." More than twelve months later, in December, 1836, being on a visit to Penzance, he in substance repeated to the late Mr. Carne, of that town, the same statement which he had made in writing to Mr. Nichols. Unfortunately, the new edition was never prepared by him; and when, after his death, his son edited a new edition, in which Mr. Knox's observations were printed, as well as some notes by Coleridge, he seems to have been ignorant that his father had been convinced by Mr. Knox, or had intended to rectify his error. He leaves it, indeed, distinctly to be inferred that the text, as originally printed, expressed his father's settled judgment on the matter in question.

Southey's biography was published early in 1820. Before the end of the same year, Mr. Watson published

[1] *Wesley and his Times*, vol. i. p. 634. Longmans & Co.

his *Observations*. It was not, however, until 1825 that the Methodists themselves put forth a new Life of their founder, such as might be regarded as a corrective to that of Southey. This was the Rev. H. Moore's Life in two volumes, published at the Conference Office. Mr. Moore was one of Wesley's trustees, the other two being Dr. Coke, and the physician, Dr. Whitehead. Of these, the last had got hold, in the first instance, of Wesley's papers, and had published, very unfairly, by means of these, a separate and an *ex parte* Life of Wesley, as regarded chiefly from the point of view of an English Churchman, although Whitehead himself was in principle a thorough Dissenter. To anticipate this publication, the other two trustees, by the help of Wesley's own publications, and of such papers as they were able to command the use of, published very hastily a joint Life of Wesley. Malice, however, had been beforehand, and Hampson's Life (Hampson had formerly been a Methodist preacher, but was then a clergyman of the Church of England) had been published even earlier than that by Coke and Moore. The latter, though it sold largely, was too hurried a composition (to a large extent, indeed, it was a mere compilation) to hold its rank as a biography of Wesley Moore's Life, published in 1825, was more carefully prepared and fuller than either of its Methodist predecessors, and was intended to serve as an antidote both to Whitehead's and to Southey's Life. It was far, however, from being really adequate to the claims of Wesley's history, notwithstanding its genuine interest and its real value. It never for a moment was likely to supersede that of Southey with the general reading world. Watson, at

the request of the Conference, undertook to prepare, and published in the year 1831, a short *Life of Wesley* for popular use and extensive circulation. But Watson was in failing health, and greatly overworked. His little volume is valuable for its observations on certain points especially connected with the relations between Wesley and the Church of England; but, regarded as a consecutive biography, it was altogether too slight, and left far too many blanks in the narrative. It was far from being even a tolerably complete epitome of Wesley's crowded and momentous history.

Since Watson's *Life of Wesley*, no English biography of the founder of Methodism had been published, until the Rev. Luke Tyerman published his elaborate work. The first volume of Dr. Smith's *History of Methodism* was, however, virtually a biography of Wesley, for the most part correct and judicious, although slight and incomplete. Though slight, it contributed some new and important information on the subject. The first volume of Dr. Stevens's able *History of Methodism* furnished a fuller and more vivid account of the chief figure among the leaders of "Methodism"—using that word in its wider sense. It was not, however, and could not be, a complete biography, nor did it stand apart. It was intermingled with the sketches and episodes of an eloquent and stirring history. The *Life of Wesley* was but the chief among several biographical lines of narrative which were interwoven in that history.

Southey's Life was very likely to suggest the history and character of Wesley as a theme for philo-

sophical students of religious movements and ecclesiastical history. It was not, however, till thirty years after the first publication of his work, that the first essay on Wesley, in a separate volume, made its appearance. This was by Isaac Taylor, and was entitled *Wesley and Methodism*. The author of Essays on Enthusiasm, on Fanaticism, on Spiritual Despotism, on Ignatius Loyola, could hardly have refrained from working out a study in his own line of composition on the character and life of Wesley. Taylor's *Wesley and Methodism* is not less faulty than might have been expected from such a writer, but it possesses at the same time considerable merits, and some parts of it are written in Taylor's best manner. Dr. Dobbin, somewhere near the same time, published a warmly appreciative sketch of Wesley. A few years earlier, the late Dr. James Hamilton, in the *North British Review*, had published an article on Wesley, which, although brilliantly written, and conceived in a kindly spirit, showed that the writer knew very little of the real character or of the labours of the founder of Methodism. After this period, nearly twenty years passed away before much was written again respecting Wesley. Some years ago, however, the gifted author of the *Schonberg-Cotta Family* series of stories, in her *Diary of Mrs. Kitty Trevelyan*, brought the life of early Methodism, according to her conception of it, vividly before a large circle of readers. Meanwhile, the public interest in Wesley, and in the history and position of Methodism, was at once shown and stimulated in England by discussions, year after year, in Convocation; by those reports of the proceedings of the annual Wesleyan

Conferences which, within the last few years, have become a striking feature in the leading newspapers of the country, both metropolitan and provincial; by discussions relating to Methodism in clerical meetings; by correspondence in the religious newspapers; by letters in the public journals, and by pamphlets relating to the subject, and chiefly bearing upon the question of reunion with the Church of England; and by certain tracts which are extensively circulated by clergymen of the Church of England. Within the last five-and-thirty years, two articles on the relations between Wesleyan Methodism and the Church of England have been published in the *London Quarterly Review*,—the former from the pen of Rev. W Arthur; the latter, which has been since published in a separate form, by myself.[1] The public mind in England has thus, within the last twenty years, become much more widely interested, and somewhat better informed, respecting Wesley and his work than formerly. Doubtless, also, the publication (in thirteen volumes), under the able editorship of Dr. Osborn, of the whole of the Wesley poetry, by which, for the first time, the world has been made aware of the wealth and variety, as well as the intensity and brilliancy, of the poetic power with which the two brothers, but especially Charles, were endowed, has contributed to the general feeling of interest with which the career of the Wesleys is now regarded—of Charles, as the Methodist poet, and otherwise his brother's faithful coadjutor; of John Wesley, as the leading mind, whose character and convictions gave law to the whole Wesleyan move-

[1] My own article has finally been incorporated as part of a volume on *The Churchmanship of John Wesley.*

ment. One further element I must name as contributing largely to the recent growth of interest in Wesley and Methodism; it is that which, indeed, has been already in part indicated in my reference to the space recently accorded to the Wesleyan Conference in the public papers—I mean the manifest, and the manifestly growing, power of Methodism. With this element in the case, the extension of the franchise, the spread of anti-State-Church principles, and the precedent, as many regard it, of the Irish Church disestablishment, distinctly connect themselves.

It is no wonder, accordingly, if Mrs. Oliphant, in her series of papers in *Blackwood's Magazine* for 1870, concerning the England of the Eighteenth Century, found herself brought face to face with John Wesley as "The Reformer" of his age. Her paper is clever, frank, and genial, but, as was to be expected, full of misconceptions. Southey would seem to have been her one source and authority, and it is something if she detects some of his fundamental mistakes.

Since Mrs. Oliphant wrote, Miss Wedgwood has published her very candid and thoughtful essay on Wesley. It is to be regretted that Miss Wedgwood had not read some of the most important authorities on her subject. She, also, seems to have relied chiefly on Southey. In her list of authorities we find Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*, and that by Coke and Moore; but not the more authentic and important biography of 1825, by Moore alone; nor (very important for Miss Wedgwood's purpose in her study of Wesley) Watson's *Observations*, nor Watson's Life (by no means unimportant), nor Dr. Stevens's very able and valuable volume, the first of his *History of*

Methodism, nor the biography of Wesley, which constitutes the first volume of the late Dr. George Smith's *History of Methodism*, nor even Isaac Taylor's *Wesley and Methodism*, a book most germane to her purpose. Neither of the articles in the *London Quarterly* to which I have referred seems to have come in her way. If they had, they might at least have cleared up some points of misconception or obscurity, or have served as an index to sources of information.

It is all the more satisfactory and noteworthy, however, on this account, that Miss Wedgwood, from her own independent study, has been enabled to refute the most fundamental errors in Southey's representation of Wesley's character. With a quiet grasp of the subject, with easy acuteness and insight, she disposes of the charge of ambition, as easily as she exposes the inconsistent and untenable naturalism which lies at the basis of Southey's resolution of religious phenomena into their supposed constituents, and of most of his criticisms of Wesley's "credulity" and "enthusiasm." Her views, indeed, appear to be strongly tinctured with Maurician mysticism, and she repeats, in substance, some of the criticisms on the evangelical Arminianism of Wesley which are contained in Coleridge's notes to Southey's biography. But her main lines of thought are admirably laid out; her grouping of facts is very skilful; her general handling of the subject is simple and masterly. It is to be regretted, indeed, that what we have is only a study of the man as he was when he first set forth on his evangelical work; or, at the utmost, of his moral and spiritual qualifications as a reformer, and

of the position to which he advanced in the opening campaigns of his life's warfare: consequently the volume gives us the impression of being merely an introduction or a fragment. Wesley the preacher is scarcely sketched at all; his intellectual characteristics as a thinker or writer are scarcely touched upon; his evangelical itinerancy is not represented to our view; his ripe manhood and his old age are passed by; of the organisation and the wide-spread work and influence of his later years next to nothing is said, except only so far as relates to the American ordinations. In short, just as misconceptions have been cleared away, as his position has been distinctly defined, as the nature of his work in general has been explained, and its need and vast importance been established; just when his disinterestedness, his magnanimity, his bravery and gentleness in peril and in controversy, have been beautifully shown; just as the general characteristics of his mission, his purpose, his faith, have been set forth, and we are waiting to see what are his actual powers for work and service, for preaching and counselling, for moulding the faith and the theology of a community, for saturating a nation with his influence, for consolidating and governing a Christian Church or family of Churches—we find that the essay breaks off, and all is over. Perhaps Miss Wedgwood acted wisely, perhaps she knew best her own compass of power—but I confess to have experienced a feeling of disappointment.

Miss Wedgwood has admirably delineated the circumstances which surrounded Wesley at the beginning of his work, and she has effectually refuted Southey's errors as to his character and motives; but the living

man himself, as preacher, as ruler, as companion or friend, she has left quite in the shadow. She has done justice to the living Wesley only as a controversialist. Indeed, it is plain that she has, so far as she has conceived his living and social humanity at all, in part, at least, misconceived it. She can appreciate the character of his writing, so far as she has studied it, and has also fine glimpses of insight into his public character and his gifts as a ruler; but of Wesley as a friend and companion she evidently has no sort of just conception; otherwise she would not have characterised as devoid of all sense of humour one of the pleasantest and brightest of men, of whose remarkable vein of humour, indeed, she must have read some instances in Southey's Life, and would have found others in Stevens's History; neither would she, notwithstanding the apparent inhumanness of Wesley's school arrangements at Kingswood, and the reticence as to domestic details in his letters, of which his brother Charles pleasantly complained in their college days, have really concluded that Wesley was defective in human sympathy, had she mastered the details of his many-sided life and character. Wesley, as will presently be shown, was perhaps as susceptible a man in regard to all the charms and attractions of social character and intercourse, especially in the case of women, as can easily be found among the saints of history.

But the most elaborate work which has appeared on Wesley is the Life, in three volumes, from the pen of the Rev. Luke Tyerman, to which I have referred. This work embodies the results of very great research, the fruit of years of industrious reading

and collection. Mr. Tyerman prepared himself for his work by writing his biography of the father of the Wesleys—Samuel Wesley, the rector of Epworth. He seems also to have collected and studied—or at least to have carefully read, if he was not able to purchase —almost every book, pamphlet, broadsheet, and periodical, in which there is any reference whatever to Wesley: so that he writes with hitherto unequalled fulness of material and knowledge so far as respects the facts of Wesley's life. Being thus furnished and prepared, he has set himself to search out and set forth in order the whole history of Wesley from his cradle to his grave. His boyhood, so far as anything can be learned about it; his school and college life; his home relations; his early personal friends, including not only university chums but well-beloved ladies; his religious history, minutely traced in all its stages, especially his changes of opinion and feeling as these gradually declared themselves, until in the end a complete revolution had been consummated, and the academical High Churchman had become the father of the Methodist revival and transformation; his preachings and journeyings; his organisations; his controversies; the persecutions he endured; the slanders in full tale and in all their baseless enormity, which were continually invented and circulated against him, however miserable and short-lived such slanders may have been; his love-affairs and his married life; his almost innumerable publications; his conferences and his helpers, ordained and unordained; his "ordinations" and his relations with the Church of England; his co-operation and his disagreements with the Moravians, with Whitefield, and "the Countess;" his

loving concord and co-working, and his no less loving differences and contentions, with his Church-satirising but Church-idea-loving brother Charles; the peaceful labours and the wide-spread love and honour which marked the protracted years of his wonderful old age; —all these matters, and a world of things besides, belonging to the infinitely busy and varied life of Wesley, Mr. Tyerman has made known to the world in these large and closely-printed volumes. The world, by the help of Mr. Tyerman, may now know all about John Wesley; may know much more, indeed, about the mere facts and consecutive history of his life, in its various fields and departments, than was ever known of him in his lifetime by his closest friends. The record may be read and pondered in all its breadth, and from beginning to end. We may study the man as he hardly could have studied himself.

It must be admitted, moreover, that Mr. Tyerman has shown no indulgence to his hero. Cromwell enjoined on the courtly portrait-painter to be sure to paint in all the warts there were upon his face. Mr. Tyerman appears rather to have been on the look-out for warts, and occasionally, as it seems to us, has magnified a mole into a wart, if he has not sometimes, looking through his microscope with broken light, fancied he saw an unevenness and blemish where in reality there was none. The severe and Rhadamanthine judgment which Mr. Tyerman has exercised in regard to the pre-eminent son, is the more remarkable because he went to the other extreme in writing the Life of the father. On that old soldier's face there were warts not a few, and of no small size. But Mr. Tyerman could hardly see any. To him the rector of

Epworth was an altogether noble and comely-seeming character, with a few venial infirmities, but no faults of any serious account; he was not merely a good and able and worthy man, although somewhat rugged in natural disposition, and time-serving in professions and policy—to Mr. Tyerman's eye he was a truly great man, a great and good man; he was a high poetic genius, a man of a brave and lofty spirit, a great sufferer, a great hero, and a great saint. What Frederick the Great is to Carlyle, Wesley of Epworth is to Mr. Tyerman; and, according to his ability, he has effected for Samuel Wesley, as a figure in the public eye, a transformation similar in character to that which the rugged Scotch philosopher has effected for the harsh and distempered Prussian king. But, having been so indulgent in the case of the father, Mr. Tyerman set himself to be severely faithful in the case of the son, pleasant and blessed a man as that son undeniably was.

Perhaps it is as well that it should be so. At all events, we may perhaps account for the different treatment which the biographer has bestowed on the two characters. The Wesley father had suffered much, had shown much patience and bravery of spirit, and had been undervalued, as Mr. Tyerman thought, and left more in the background than such a father of such a family—and in particular of such sons—should have been. There was a great deal, too, that was picturesque in the history and the situation of the forlorn, persecuted, unbusiness-like, and weather-beaten rector. Here was a temptation to an author—to repair an old injustice, to bring out a striking figure into light, to disinter a hero. As to the son, the case is different. Mr. Tyerman had passed his life among those who

almost worship the memory of John Wesley; some of whom thought him absolute perfection, and cherished toward him a blind and unintelligent admiration. Probably he himself at one time shared strongly in these feelings. Research showed Mr. Tyerman that the popular conceptions of Wesley were to some extent mistaken. In applying his research, moreover, to point after point in Wesley's life, he discovered what —as seen through his lens—looked like considerable faults; although, when the natural eye looks at the whole character, they fade away into almost imperceptible foibles, or are seen to be, in reality, points of excellence. Here, then, were discoveries which the truth-loving biographer deemed it necessary to point out; here were popular errors which it was his stern duty, as an historian, to correct. Chivalry, sustained by fact, as he fancied, prompted Mr. Tyerman to make a hero of the father; public fidelity seemed to require that he should enlighten, as to certain points, the blind worshippers of the son.

Nor may we deny that it was Mr. Tyerman's duty to be rigidly faithful in his history of John Wesley, and this all the more because he is himself a Methodist. We are bound to repudiate altogether the maxim, as applied to such a case, that he ought, as one of Wesley's followers, to

> "Be to his faults a little blind,
> Be to his virtues very kind."

The sanctity of truth—historical truth—is a holier and more venerable thing than even the reputation of John Wesley. Nor should we withhold from the biographer our admiration for the courage and fidelity with which, according to his own conceptions of truth,

he has done his work. Moreover, as I have intimated, his rugged fidelity has, at least in one way, done good. No one can read this Wesleyan Life of Wesley without feeling certain that the whole of Wesley's life, including whatever might have appeared to bear an unfavourable construction, and all the scandals which were circulated respecting him by his meanest and most malignant foes, is brought fully out to view, and that, if the biographer has not "set down aught in malice," he has, on the other hand, "extenuated" nothing. Whatever he knew of to tell is told; whatever might at any time have been suspected, or scandalously alleged, that is told too. The worst possible is indicated as to Wesley. And the result is, a character with as much of goodness in it and as little alloy of evil as could well have been conceived; the character of a man absolutely free from meanness, from malice, from any standing anger or resentment; who, if he now and then went wrong, did so from the sanguine imprudences of a generous and susceptible nature, or, in one or two cases in the course of half a century, from the momentary irritation which a thwarted chief might be apt to feel; but whose whole life was one of unremitting self-denial and unresting labour for the good of others. Such a character, so revealed and established, comes out most impressively from Mr. Tyerman's biography.

Still, I cannot but add that, in my judgment, Mr. Tyerman has overdone his fidelity. He almost seems to have made it his rule to take the worst construction which, with anything like probability, could be put upon Wesley's conduct. In the case of a charge or prejudice against Wesley, he often gives

the benefit of any doubt, as it seems to me, not to the accused, but to the accuser. Considering who and what Wesley was, and what his antecedents and independent character must be admitted to have been, this appears to be peculiarly unfair. Besides which, there is a tone in his dealing with Wesley which fairly astonishes one at times. Mr. Tyerman does not sum up in phrase of precise accuracy just what happened, and leave his readers to draw their conclusions—he censures, he pronounces, he condemns; and this, too, in a tone of harshness, in some instances, and of lofty decision, as if he were Wesley's superior and judge. I believe that Macaulay—it is perfectly certain that Southey—would never have ventured, in so absolute, unceremonious, dictatorial a style to pronounce censure on John Wesley. They would have felt their own inferiority to him; that, if he sometimes erred, he was at least a good and great man, a venerable saint, as to whom they could not venture to pronounce an unfavourable judgment, even in individual acts of his life, without modesty and self-restraint—without what the Romans would have called *verecundia*. Mr. Tyerman has not been restrained by any such diffidence. At times his mere *ipse dixit*, without even the formality of any attempt to weigh evidence or investigate the matter, pronounces at once sharply and shortly the folly or the wrong-doing of Wesley.

Nor does it ever seem to have occurred to Mr. Tyerman, that perhasp Wesley and he regarded certain questions from different points of view; that he ought to have tried fully to master Wesley's own way of thinking and of regarding the matter in hand; and that, after all, from some point of view less con-

ventional and more really true than his own, things which seem to his prejudices to be wrong might turn out to be right. Considering that Wesley was a man of far more thought than most of us—who had seen much more of life than any of us—it is possible that he might have had so much to say for his own way of thinking and acting, even when it seems to be directly in opposition to some current notions of to-day, as at least to warrant arrest of judgment in the case. Mr. Tyerman appears incapable of entering sympathetically into the mind and idiosyncrasy of Wesley, and yet does not appear to feel that this is the case, or to be aware that perfect sympathetic intelligence is necessary in order to enable him to write the Life of Wesley. He judges merely and unhesitatingly by his own lights and his own instincts. Those instincts, at least in some cases, I regard as mere conventional prejudices, and am prepared to vindicate Wesley just where and wherefore his biographer condemns him.[1]

Nothing, indeed, is more evident than that Mr. Tyerman is deficient in that faculty of dramatic sympathy and insight, without which it is impossible for any man to understand, much more to write, the life of another man, especially of a unique and

[1] The contrast in tone between Mr. Tyerman's treatment of Wesley and his manner of judging him, and the manner in which genial outsiders write of him, may be understood by reference to the article on "Wesley and Wesleyanism" in the *British Quarterly* for October, 1871. Still more striking is the contrast between the tone of Mr. Tyerman's biography, and the truly liberal and sympathetic as well as remarkably well-informed view of Wesley's life and character given by Messrs. Abbey and Overton—and especially by the latter—in that noble work, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century.*

wonderful man. He misunderstood the father, painting him after his own heart merely, but not as the facts, properly interpreted in a spirit of insight, really present him to our view: he painted a man he could understand and admire, but it was not the rector. In that case the facts were unconsciously warped to suit the sympathetic conception of the biographer; in the case of the son, he generally sticks to the facts in their mere outside aspect, but often he cannot get behind them—cannot see their real meaning. In neither case have the facts helped him to a true and real conception of the life and character which lay beneath them.

Nevertheless Mr. Tyerman has done a great work. He has furnished perfect means of knowledge; the means, indeed, if he is carefully read, of correcting himself where he is wrong. His narrative of the most important parts of Wesley's life is particularly full and good. The last two chapters, for example, are complete and impressive in a high degree; presenting Wesley's later years and last days as they had never been presented before. In fine, Mr. Tyerman has prepared and worked up into narrative almost complete materials from which to prepare a re-moulded biography of Wesley, which shall, with true realisation, exhibit him as he grew and changed, and was enlarged from stage to stage—as he felt and judged and acted from point to point of his eventful life. Such a Life of Wesley will yet, I hope, be some day written. Meantime, in the chapters which follow, I venture to offer a contribution of materials towards such a Life which, imperfect as it is in scope and contents as well as in workmanship, may not, I trust, be without its distinctive value.

PART II.

WESLEY'S CHARACTER AND OPINIONS IN HIS EARLIER LIFE, TO THE PERIOD OF HIS EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.

CHAPTER I.

HIS CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL LIFE.

MY chief object in this part of my study of the living Wesley is to bring into clear light some points of Wesley's history, and especially some aspects of his character up to the time of his final and full spiritual change, which hitherto seem either to have escaped recognition or to have been misunderstood. I cannot, in the space of one small volume, attempt to give anything like a complete view, even in outline, of the course of Wesley's life. But such an outline will be given as may serve as a basis, and may suffice to suggest a perspective, for those points of chief interest in his character and development, through the successive stages of his history, with which in this life-portraiture I propose to deal.[1] In

[1] Those who desire to know the details of Wesley's history, with many newly-discovered facts,—so far as these may be given in one handy volume,—are referred to Telford's *Life of John Wesley* (1886).

the present short chapter I shall have to correct some singular misconceptions on the part of Mr. Tyerman. From his boyhood, through all his pre-conversion years, it may, I think, be conclusively shown that Wesley has been misunderstood, and perhaps more completely, as to some points, by Mr. Tyerman than by others who have written on the subject.

JOHN WESLEY was born June 17, 1703, at Epworth, where his father, the Rev. Samuel Wesley, was rector during the first thirty years of the last century (1697-1735); being four years older than his brother Charles, so long his companion in labour and so gifted as a sacred poet. The rectory was filled with a numerous family, of whom those that grew up, whether sons or daughters, were all gifted and accomplished. Brave, bright spirits and high principles were the growth of that remote Lincolnshire parsonage, with the rugged and granitic father, and the noble and episcopal mother. It was the home of strict and earnest religion, of much learning, of true high breeding, and of pinching and sometimes bitter poverty. Both the rector and his wife came of a line of Puritan ancestors, who had endured persecution for their faith, but who were at once gentlemen, scholars, and divines; and the training in the parsonage was not unworthy of such a twofold ancestry.

Susanna Wesley was an admirable mother, and it was her custom to give each of her children an hour a week, on a fixed day, for religious conversation and prayer. It was on Thursday that she conversed and prayed with John. Orderliness, reasonableness, steadfastness of purpose, calm authority, tender affection, were combined in this justly celebrated woman. And

all these qualities were remarkably reproduced in her son John.

Wesley was at home with his mother—he was eight years of age—when, in the absence of the rector in London for several months at Convocation, Mrs. Wesley felt it to be her duty to supplement the parish services of a curate, who had to work two parishes single-handed, and who was, besides, but an inefficient preacher and pastor, by holding afternoon services for her family and the neighbouring parishioners in the kitchen of the parsonage. She used to read a sermon or some good book, and to conduct a service of Scripture reading and prayer with the gathered company. These services were very popular, and the large farm-rectory kitchen was crowded. The curate, disliking the services, which looked not unlike the setting up of a conventicle in the rector's kitchen by the rector's wife, appealed by letter to the absent husband, who thereupon wrote to her upon the subject. The mother of the Wesleys replied to her husband in a long and earnest letter, which ended as follows: "If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command, in such full and express terms, as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such was the woman who bore and nursed and trained John Wesley. Such a woman was worthy to be, as she came to be, not only the guide of his childhood, but the closest counsellor of his ripening manhood.

When Wesley was nearly six years old, the rectory was set on fire by a malicious parishioner. All the rest of the family had escaped safely from the flaming house, when it was found that "Jacky" was missing. Two brave fellows rescued him, at great peril to themselves, and he was delivered into his father's arms. "Come, neighbours," said the rector, "let us kneel down; let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children. Let the house go: I am rich enough." John Wesley commemorated this escape, in after life, by an engraving, under one of his portraits, of a house in flames, underneath which is the motto: "Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?"

Before he was eleven, the boy was sent to the Charterhouse School. Here he suffered such hardships and oppressions as were common at public schools in that age. But he was a diligent and successful scholar, and a patient and forgiving boy, of a brave and elastic spirit, who had at home been inured, not indeed to oppression, but to hard living and scanty fare. When, therefore, his seniors robbed him of the best portions of his food, as they not seldom did, he could bear the privation with more patience, and perhaps with less injury, than if he had been a full-fed and pampered boy. It is a characteristic feature in his case, that he seems to have carried away, on the whole, pleasant recollections of his school, where, in due time, he rose to be among the most distinguished scholars. Once a year, in later life, it was his custom to revisit the scene of his school-days, and walk round the Charterhouse garden, "chewing the cud" of early memories, to him more "sweet" than "bitter."

It appears that there was a tradition in the school, that Wesley was accustomed, when himself a senior, to associate with the junior scholars. This is likely enough to have been true, considering what the manners and, it may well be feared, the morals of the school were at that time. He might do some good to his juniors, and might, perhaps, among them, avoid evil communications. As for the story, however, related by Mr. Tyerman, that when Mr. Tooke, his master, asked him the reason for his so associating, he answered,

"Better to rule in hell than to serve in heaven,"

I simply regard it as an invention and embellishment, added by his school-fellows, *more puerorum*, to amplify and round off the tradition and the story. I feel sure, besides, that Wesley, if he had quoted Milton at all, would have quoted him accurately. It is said that Wesley was accustomed to "harangue" his juniors; and it is not unlikely that he did, more or less, expound and hold forth to them on interesting matters of routine and duty, or possibly on themes of fancy. He was a quick boy, with the gift of a teacher, and not wanting in the fancy of a poet.

But one remark made by Mr. Tyerman, as to his school-life at the Charterhouse, strikes me as singularly austere. It is the first instance of the austerity with which the biographer has treated Wesley throughout. Wesley, who, it must be remembered, entered the Charterhouse at the age of ten, is said, with solemn emphasis, there to have "lost the religion which had marked his character from the days of infancy." He is himself quoted to the effect that at school he was

"negligent of outward duties, and continually guilty of outward sins." And on the strength of this confession his biographer says: "Terrible is the danger when a child leaves a pious home for a public school. *John Wesley entered the Charterhouse a saint, and left it a sinner.*" That is to say, he entered it a saint of ten years old, and left it a sinner of seventeen.

Now, I emphatically agree that the danger is very great indeed which attends a child leaving a simple, pious home to enter upon a public school. The wickedness of public schools has been proverbial. In the last century they may well have been still worse than in the present. But I think the instance of Wesley is by no means a strong one to cite in illustration of the point. I hardly know how, adequately, to interpret the saying that Wesley at ten was "a saint," or to understand the contrast between the saint-child of ten and the sinner-youth of seventeen. But it is well to observe in what sense Wesley was "a sinner" in his teens. He, who himself made the confession of his religious failures, has also taught us how to understand and qualify them. He was negligent and careless, and he was guilty of what he knew to be outward sins; but yet such sins, he tells us in the same context, were "not scandalous in the eye of the world." He adds, moreover, "However, I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was: 1. Not being so bad as other people; 2. Having still a kindness for religion; and, 3. Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers." [1]

Such is the sentence which Wesley, the sternest of

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, Sixth Edition, vol. i. pp. 21, 22.

judges in such a case, pronounced on his own moral and religious state when he was at the Charterhouse —a sentence pronounced, it must be remembered, at a time when all Wesley's judgments as to such cases were far more severe than they became as revised, after many years' experience, in his later life. It was in 1738 that he so wrote of himself. It is clear that Wesley never lost, even at the Charterhouse, a tender respect for religion, the fear of God, and the forms of Christian propriety. That he was at this time unconverted there can be no doubt; but when Mr. Tyerman, with such awful emphasis, tells us that, having gone to the Charterhouse a "saint"-child at ten years of age, he left it "a sinner" at seventeen, he uses language which can scarcely fail to convey an altogether exaggerated impression as to the character of the boy's moral and spiritual faults and failings.

Nor do I think such unqualified language is consistent with the account he had given on a former page of young Wesley's behaviour at the Charterhouse. Isaac Taylor, in his work on *Wesley and Methodism*, says with reference to the privations and oppressions which Wesley endured at school, that "he learned as a boy to suffer wrongfully with cheerful patience, and to conform himself to cruel despotisms without acquiring either the slave's temper or the despot's." Mr. Tyerman substantially adopts this language into his text as his own description of how Wesley fared and did at the Charterhouse (p. 20). But, for my part, I cannot help thinking that not a little grace must have been still working in the soul of the brave and patient boy, to enable him to behave as he did. Wesley must have carried a heart, not only bright and hopeful, but

forgiving, not only elastic and vigorous, but patient and generous, or he could not have looked back in after days on his six or seven years at the Charterhouse, not only without bitterness, but with pleasure, and, to use Southey's phrase, have retained "so great a predilection for the place, that he made it his custom to walk through the scene of his schoolboy years.

One consequence of his school experience I may note in passing. There can be no doubt that what he saw and experienced of the coarse and wicked horseplay of a great school, had much to do with the regulations which he made long afterwards for Kingswood School, forbidding all play, and permitting only of walks and garden-work by way of exercise and recreation. It was no slight evidence, let me here subjoin, of at least the powerful restraining influence of religion, that Wesley passed through such an ordeal as his six or seven years' residence at the Charterhouse without contracting any taint of vice.

CHAPTER II.

THE COLLEGIAN AT OXFORD.

LET us linger awhile with Wesley at Oxford—which University he entered, as student at Christchurch, in 1720—not so much that we may review at any length his course and experience there, as that we may observe what manner of person he was—first, as a collegian, companion, and friend; next, as a theological student and Churchman; and, in both respects, as a living and moving man, full of power over those who came near him.

When Wesley went to Oxford at seventeen, he was a gay, sprightly, and virtuous youth, full of good classics, and also with some knowledge of Hebrew, which he had begun to learn under his brother Samuel, during the short interval, apparently, between leaving the Charterhouse and gaining his studentship at Christchurch. He was moral and church-going; according to his own testimony, he read the Scriptures and religious books, especially commentaries; but he was destitute of any true apprehension of spiritual religion: he was, in fact, a devout yet half-worldly Pharisee, much such another as the young ruler in the Gospels, only without his possessions. His scholarship yielded him £40 a year, which ill sufficed for his needs. His tutors were considerate, and indeed generous; his poverty-wrung parents did all they

could for him, the father joining to his gifts (poor man) reproofs now and then, of his son's want of adequate economy. But with all this, and although John's parsimony must really have been extreme, it was very hard for him, during his undergraduate course, and afterwards until pupils and a fellowship brought him a competency, to "make ends meet." "Dear Jack," wrote his mother to him, after he had been some four years at college and had taken his bachelor's degree, "be not discouraged; do your duty, keep close to your studies, and hope for better days. Perhaps, notwithstanding all, we shall pick up a few crumbs for you before the end of the year. Dear Jacky, I beseech Almighty God to bless thee." A month later, I find that one of the college dons, who had lent Wesley money, had "paid himself out of Wesley's exhibition," not altogether to the contentment of Mrs. Wesley.

In November of 1724, Mrs. Wesley writes a kind letter to her son, in which she urges him to save as much money as possible that he might pay his debts. Early in January 1725, the father writes a brief note, promising £5 towards £10, which Wesley owed to a friend; and three weeks later he writes to him again as follows:—

"WROOTE, *January* 26, 1725.

"DEAR SON,—I am so well pleased with your decent behaviour, or, at least, with your letters, that I hope I shall have no occasion to remember any more some things that are past; and since you have now for sometime bit upon the bridle, I will take care hereafter to put a little honey upon it as oft as I am able; but then it shall be of my own mere motion,

as the last £5 was, for I will bear no rivals in my kingdom.—"Your affectionate father,

"SAMUEL WESLEY."

The meaning of this not unpleasing, although monitory, letter is not altogether clear. It would seem, however, that the father had been solicited previously to give some help to his son—perhaps by the mother or one of the sisters—and that he had refused, accompanying his refusal with some admonitions; further, that the son had taken his father's reproof somewhat amiss at first, but had latterly expressed himself in his letters in a way which satisfied his father. The father had accordingly relented, as the letter shows. Mr. Tyerman's commentary on this and the brief preceding note is altogether in an exaggerated tone of austerity. He writes as if such letters "cast shadows on the character" of young Wesley; he declares, quite unwarrantably, that, from the age of eleven to twenty-two, Wesley was, "by his own confession, an habitual, if not profane and flagrant sinner," and that he "thoughtlessly contracted debts greater than he had means to pay." There is no evidence whatever to justify such language as this. Wesley seems always to have kept at a remote distance from anything like "profane and flagrant sin;" he was "a sinner," as moral and virtuous youths are sinners, but only so; and if he could not make ends meet on £40 a year, there is no evidence whatever that he "thoughtlessly contracted debts." His sister Emilia, writing to him a few months later, said, no doubt most truly, "I know you are a young man encompassed with difficulties, and have passed

through many hardships already, and probably must through many more before you are easy in the world;" she adds, also—poor, half-clad girl!—a noticeable remark: "I know not when we have had so good a year, both at Wroote and at Epworth, as this year; but, instead of saving anything to clothe my sister or myself, we are just where we were.
One thing I warn you of—let not my giving you this account be any hindrance to your affairs. If you want assistance in any case, my father is as able to give it now as at any time these last ten years; nor shall we be ever the poorer for it." [1]

It is evident that the sister's sympathies were heartily with her brother. There is, in truth, no foundation whatever for imputing to John Wesley, in his earlier years at Oxford, improvidence or unthrift. I take it for granted that he never incurred a serious expense, unless sometimes to purchase a book which appeared to be needful to his success as a student. That he had any extravagant habits or tendencies whatever, there is not the least reason to suppose. His mother did, indeed, urge him gently to try to save, probably because the rector would have her put in an admonition to that effect; but she never approaches the tone of censure in writing to her son. If for once she had seemed to incline that way, wanting as she was, for herself and her family, almost the necessaries of life, and not understanding fully a collegian's necessities, it would have been no great wonder. But there is no such tone in her correspondence. Her loving son had talked of trying to save a little that he might be able to visit his family; she

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 33.

gently reminds him that the payment of his debts was the first thing to be thought of, but expresses, at the same time, the hope that she may be able to bear his charges home. "I am not without hope," she says in the letter from which I have lately quoted a few words, "of meeting you next summer" (in London). "If you then be willing to accompany me to Wroote, I shall bear your charges, as God shall enable me."

To this subject of young Wesley's faults and failings Mr. Tyerman gives a whole paragraph—a very emphatic, and not a very short, paragraph. And yet, in the very next paragraph, and within some half-dozen lines of saying that Wesley "had need to repent in dust and ashes" for his sins—for the sins, among the rest, of extravagance and thoughtless improvidence, by which he had brought additional burdens on his poor, embarrassed, and struggling father, Mr. Tyerman goes on to say that "Wesley was far too noble and too high-principled to seek admission into the Christian ministry" merely as a livelihood. Surely, if he had been improvident, extravagant, inconsiderate of his father's circumstances, "an habitual, if not profane and flagrant, sinner," "without religious sentiments, and without a religious aim," as Mr. Tyerman tells us he was, it would not have been by any means incredible that when he went to college, it might have been his intention to enter the Church as a profession, without any high religious motive. I do not in the least wish to intimate that it was so; but it is not consistent, on the one hand, to place John Wesley so low in respect of religion, if not also of morality, and on the other hand, to speak of him as so noble and so high-principled a young man.

Leaving this point, however, let us note the indications of young Wesley's character in the earlier years of his college life, which are afforded by the family correspondence with which Mr. Tyerman enriches his first chapter, "Wesley at Home, at School, and at College." No one can read this correspondence without becoming aware that "Jacky"—the very name "Jacky" might indeed be sufficient to settle that question—was by no means the semi-stoical person, destitute of homely warmth and kindliness, and of natural interest and concern about the little matters of family life, which some of his critics—which even a writer of such discrimination and insight as Miss Wedgwood—would seem to have supposed him to be. If at a later period of his life, when absorbed and oppressed by the care of the religious movement at Oxford, he forgot, on his arrival from a visit home, to tell his brother Charles of the details of the family circumstances, that must be attributed, not in the least to want of feeling for his parents and sisters, or lack of interest in all that really affected them, but to the weight and pressure at the moment of a most solemn religious undertaking and responsibility. How lovingly and generously he cared for his mother and sisters through life—with what depth and intensity, with what force of reason and fact, and of barely suppressed indignation, he vindicated himself, on one occasion, from a petulant and unwarrantable imputation to the contrary—the students of his life will hardly fail to remember.[1] In his early days at Oxford he kept up very loving relations and correspondence

[1] See his letter to his sister Emily, in Clarke's *Wesley Family*, p. 519, and in Mr. Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. pp. 424–5.

with his sisters. "More than once," as Mr. Tyerman tells us, "when requesting that his sisters would write to him, he playfully remarks that, though he was so poor, he would be able to spare the postage for a letter now and then." And, writing to his mother on the 1st of November, 1724, from Oxford, he says: "I should be exceedingly glad to keep up a correspondence with my sister Emily, if she were willing. I have writ once or twice to my sister Sukey, too, but have not had an answer either from her or my sister Hetty, from whom I have more than once desired the poem of 'The Dog.' I should be glad to hear how things go on at Wroote, which I now remember with more pleasure than Epworth; so true it is, at least in me, that the persons, not the place, make home so pleasant." A sweeter, purer tone of writing than this we could hardly imagine. It will be observed that the family were now living, not at Epworth, but at Wroote, the living which his father held with Epworth, and that this was the reason of the turn in the last sentence. Wroote itself was a most uninviting place, very different from the pleasant and old-fashioned settledness of the town of Epworth, with its comfortable houses and goodly gardens. The letter closes by begging his mother's and his father's blessing on their "dutiful son." It was five months later than the date of this letter that Emilia Wesley wrote the letter to her brother from which I have already quoted.

Poor Emilia, eldest of the gifted sisters! Mr. Kirk says of her, in his *Mother of the Wesleys*, "Her love for her mother was strong as death; and she regarded her brother John with a passionate fondness.

Though so much younger than herself, she selected him as her 'most intimate companion, her counsellor in difficulties,' to whom 'her heart lay open at all times.'" Crossed in love, and for some reason not fully explained, but perhaps connected with her love affair, irritated against her father, her spirit chafed under the difficulties of her situation; but she bravely helped both her family and herself during the years of her earlier womanhood. She was known in her later years as Mrs. Harper, a widow, and died in the bosom of her brother's Methodism, in her eightieth year. Poor Sukey! too, the second sister—beautiful, vivacious, and accomplished, but whose lot was far more troublous than that of Emily, though Emily's was so far from an easy life. She was in the flower of her life when her brother referred to her in the letter which has been quoted. Some years later, after she had married the wretched profligate Ellison, her youngest sister wrote of her: "Poor Sukey! she is very ill. People think she is going into a consumption. It would be well for her if she were where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'" And again, poor Hetty! Her lot was as sad as that of her sister Ellison. The most gifted of all the sisters, to whom it was more natural to write in sweet verse than in prose—though her prose, like that of all the sisters, was excellent—her sad story has in part been told by Mr. Kirk in the interesting volume to which I have referred. Her husband was every way unsuitable for her—an ignorant, illiterate, and degraded plumber. Mehetabel (Hetty) Wesley, or Mrs. Wright, after a living martyrdom of some twenty years, died in 1750, leaving not a few beautiful verses

behind her. To these and to all his sisters Wesley never failed to show himself an affectionate brother. How it is that there was no reference to his amiable but deformed sister Mary in the letter of Wesley I have quoted, it is not possible to guess. She became Mrs. Whitelamb—Whitelamb having been first her father's amanuensis, afterwards his curate, and finally, when he married, becoming his successor in the small rectory of Wroote—and she died in 1734, one year after her marriage, at the age of thirty-eight, having had, indeed, a short but not an unhappy life. Keziah, the remaining sister of Wesley, was, in 1724, only fourteen years old.

Mr. Badcock, in the *Westminster Magazine*, gave a picture of Wesley as he was at Oxford in 1724, when he was about twenty-one years of age. "He appeared," we are told, "the very sensible and acute collegian; a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments." He was at this time a general favourite. But, having taken his degree, and being in prospect of presently taking orders, a decided change began to come over his tone of thought and feeling. He became much more serious and thoughtful than he had been, and corresponded earnestly both with his father and his mother as to the motives which should govern him in seeking to take orders; as to the studies which he should pursue; and as to the principles and manner of life which should give character to one intending to enter the holy ministry. Mr. Tyerman gives the most important letters, and enables us to trace the formation of Wesley's principles. Thomas à Kempis, Jeremy Taylor, and William Law, as he himself has particu-

larly described, were his chief instructors at the first, and for a considerable period. The asceticism of the first, indeed, was always too sombre for him. But, on the whole, he was greatly moulded by their influence, and became after a time himself an ascetic, with a mystical bias (due partly to Law), and also a strong ritualistic tendency, but at all times free from sombreness of colouring or moroseness of temperament. Against Jeremy Taylor's gloomy and morbid teachings as to the necessity of perpetual, sorrowful uncertainty on the point of the penitent sinner's pardon and acceptance, Wesley's cheerful faith and good sense revolted from the first. Writing to his mother in 1725, he says: "If we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us (which He will not do unless we are regenerate), certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then, undoubtedly, we are in this life of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this!" There, in 1725, we have already settled within Wesley's mind, notwithstanding his High Church indoctrination from the writings of Taylor, one of the characteristic doctrines of Methodism, namely, that of a present salvation from guilt and fear, through the indwelling of Christ. It is true, indeed, that as yet Wesley had not the experience and knowledge of evangelical faith and life which made the foundation of his special teaching in after life on the subject of conversion and the witness of the Spirit. But he had already taken the general position in opposition equally to Calvinism and to Carolan High

Churchmanship indicated in the passage just quoted. It is clear, also, from the parenthesis, that as yet the modern Anglican doctrine of baptismal regeneration had not been embraced by him.

It was from the *Christian's Pattern* of Thomas à Kempis, and from Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, that Wesley learned the doctrine of entire Christian consecration and holiness which afterward developed into the Methodist doctrine of "Christian Perfection." "I saw," he says in a passage which Mr. Tyerman quotes, "that simplicity of intention and purity of affection—one design in all we speak and do, and one desire ruling all our tempers—are indeed the wings of the soul, without which she can never ascend to God. I sought after this from that hour." This was in 1725, and the lesson was learned from the *Pattern*. Again, he says, in reference to the effect of the *Holy Living and Dying*—"Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God—all my thoughts and words and actions—being thoroughly convinced there was no medium, but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God or myself, that is, the devil." Truly does Mr. Tyerman say, after quoting these passages, and more than we have cited—"Here, then, we have the turning-point in Wesley's history It was not until thirteen years after this that he received the consciousness of being saved through faith in Christ; but from this time his whole aim was to serve God and his fellow-creatures, and get safe to heaven." Let it be noted, accordingly, that 1725 was a great era in Wesley's history. Furthermore, in the same year he and his mother — that remarkable woman was his chief theological tutor

—settled between them the question of predestination, in the sense in which Wesley always afterwards dealt with it. As to faith, however, Wesley still remained altogether beclouded. Faith with him, at this period, seems to have meant little else than right opinion. No wonder, after wandering for so many years in the wilderness because misled by this natural and prevalent error, that in later life he waged war so sharply, so continually, so resolutely against this error. As yet he had no glimmering of the truth that a true Christian faith is strictly personal, is "of the operation of God," is a moral and spiritual affection and act, or habit of acting, of the highest significance and potency, rooting the soul in Christ and God, and including within itself implicitly the whole fruit of the Spirit of God.

Wesley was ordained Deacon in September 1725, by Bishop Potter, and preached his first sermon at South Leigh, a small village near Witney In March, 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College. By this time his increasing strictness had begun to attract attention; but, as yet, no greater reproach than that of singular and somewhat excessive religiousness attached to him in the minds of any. No one regarded him as fanatical; most looked upon him with high respect as one of the most distinguished and conscientious, one of the most accomplished and able men in the University. From the time of his receiving the Lincoln fellowship, however, he was to enter upon a new stage of his career. He himself has told us how he took occasion, by his change of colleges, to give a resolute, though not uncourteous, *congé* to all his former acquaintances who were not as serious and as earnest as himself. From this time, accordingly, Wesley

became a religious devotee, although he took no taint of sourness, and by no means lost all his smart pleasantry of speech. He was at this time, and indeed all his life, as his circumstances permitted, a very hard and very various student. Oriental languages, oratory and poetry, metaphysics, logic, and ethics, as well as divinity, entered into his weekly plan of study. Eight months after his election to the fellowship, he was appointed Greek Lecturer in his college, and Moderator of the Classes. His skill and readiness in logic, it is well known, were extraordinary. "Leisure and I," he said in a letter to his brother Samuel, written about this time, "have taken leave of one another. I propose to be busy as long as I live, if my health is so long indulged me." From the time of his receiving his first college allowances as Fellow, Wesley's financial battle was over; and, exercising economy as rigid over his personal expenses afterward as in his greatest poverty before, he was able to assist his brother Samuel in helping their father, to be, and to the end of his life, a benefactor to his family. He never saved to enrich himself. The summer after his election he took a sort of holiday, for which he had been longing, and for which his parents and family had longed not less than he. He spent it at Epworth and Wroote, acting as his father's curate, and pursuing his studies.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN WESLEY, MISS KIRKHAM, AND MRS. PENDARVES.[1]

IN 1727 we catch a very interesting glimpse of Wesley's relations with others beyond his own family. There resided at Stanton, in Gloucestershire, the Rev. Lionel Kirkham. This clergyman had (at least) two daughters and a son. Of the daughters, one, Sarah, had married the Rev. William Capoon (or Chapone), and remained, as his wife, at Stanton. She is often referred to in the *Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*, with whom she was on terms of intimate friendship, as a woman of remarkable talent; she appears also to have been very fond of theological discussions. Another (or the other) daughter, Betty, is referred to in a quotation I shall immediately give from a family letter. The brother was an intimate college friend of Wesley's, and became, a few years later, one of the original band of Methodists. Wesley had visited this family, and appears to have been a very welcome guest there. The brother was evidently very anxious that Wesley should become his brother-in-law, and Wesley appears to have been greatly impressed with the merits and charms of Miss Betty In a letter which Mr. Tyerman gives from young Kirkham to Wesley, dated February, 1727, and which begins,

[1] Afterwards Mrs. Delany.

"With familiarity I write, dear Jack"—a letter, I must say, so empty, although hearty, and so broadly rustic in tone, as to surprise us from a friend of Wesley's—I find the following passage:—

"Your most deserving, queer character; your worthy personal accomplishments; your noble endowments of mind; your little and handsome person; and your obliging and desirable conversation, have been the pleasing subject of our discourse for some pleasant hours. You have been often in the thoughts of M. B. [Miss Betty], which I have curiously observed, when with her alone, by inward smiles and sighs, and abrupt expressions concerning you. Shall this suffice? I caught her, this morning, in a humble and devout posture on her knees. I am called to read a *Spectator* to my sister Capoon. I long for the time when you are to supply father's absence. Keep your counsel, and burn this when perused," etc.

It is singular that such a letter as this was not burned by Wesley—very curious that it was preserved for a hundred and forty years before it was published in the *Wesleyan Times*. It may well, however, serve as preface to a series of letters of the greatest and most curious interest, which reveal Wesley in a light altogether new, which show the workings of his mind, and even his style of writing, as no one could ever have expected to see them, utterly contradicting the idea that he was wanting in the softer and warmer emotions of our nature—an idea which has grown up from the singleness with which, for fifty years, he devoted himself to the intense, practical work of an apostle. No greater mistake could there be than such an idea; and if, in his later life, there are appearances

which seem to lend a countenance to it, the reason is that, in proportion to his natural susceptibility to the warm attraction of intimate and fond affections, was the rigidness of watchful suppression which he imposed upon his temperament, when the solemn life-work which Providence had assigned to him demanded his undivided and unintermitted energies.

The correspondence to which I refer was not, however, between Wesley and Miss Betty Kirkham—the lady referred to in the extract just given—but between Wesley and an intimate friend of hers, known for three-quarters of a century as a woman of high accomplishments and of almost unequalled charms and attractions, who moved in the best society of the country, and was honoured for half a century and more with the intimate friendship and confidence of King George III. and his Queen. I refer to Mrs. Delany, whose history is so well known from her *Life and Correspondence*, published by Lady Llanover.

Mary Granville, afterwards Mrs. Delany, was left a widow after her first marriage, early in 1725, being then twenty-four years of age. Her first husband's name was Pendarves. Her mother's house was near Gloucester, not far from Stanton, Gloucestershire, where Mr. Kirkham lived, and she had become very intimate with his daughters. One of these, as I have remarked, is often referred to in the *Life and Correspondence* — the "sister Capoon" of the foregoing extract—mother-in-law, in after years, of Mrs. Chapone, whose *Letters* were once so well known. The other is never once referred to, and does not appear to have been known to Lady Llanover, although her ladyship was a grand-niece (I believe) of Mrs.

Delany, or, at all events, a descendant of her sister, Anne Granville. And yet this other, as appears from the correspondence to which we have referred, was a most highly-valued friend of Mrs. Pendarves (or Delany), and a Christian of no ordinary character. It seems, indeed, as if all the religious correspondence and the religious life and connexions of the fascinating Court lady in her earlier history must have vanished from her *Remains*, so completely wanting are any traces of this phase of her history from the *Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Delany*. And yet the evidence is before us that the idol of the Court circle was much occupied, at least for considerable intervals, with religious thought and feeling, and that between her and John Wesley there was carried on a very remarkable correspondence, deeply coloured with religion.

What is more, it is evident that this lady succeeded to the place in Wesley's thoughts which had been occupied by Miss Betty Kirkham. The latter he would have married, if it had been possible; but some insurmountable obstacle—it may have been a stern parental decree—made such a union impossible. Not concealing his deep sorrow at such a barrier to his tenderest and most treasured hopes from her friend and his new correspondent—frankly, indeed, avowing it throughout—Wesley would have had the dazzling, but most amiable, widow take her place, if she would but have inclined her ear and heart. She was evidently not insensible to his merits nor to his admiration. But it was hardly likely at any time that she would have accepted the position of his wife. At all events, after several years of correspondence, a long visit to Ireland, with its new scenes, its fashionable absorption, its

dissipating stimulants, interrupted the correspondence for some time. Then she made an attempt, with deep apologies, to renew it; but Wesley had escaped from the pleasing snare, and, with stately but tender courtesy, in a final letter, bowed the charmer out of his circle.

It was the fashion, in those times, for friends to have fictitious names by which to address and speak of each other—names often borrowed from some romance of the time. Mrs. Pendarves' name, with many of her friends, was Aspasia; her sister Anne's was Selina. Miss Betty Kirkham's was Varanese. John Wesley's, in this correspondence, was Cyrus; his brother Charles's was Araspes. Lady Llanover prints letters in her volumes which mention Cyrus, but she had no suspicion that Cyrus was Wesley. What a striking mosaic relief would this correspondence have introduced into her first volume if she had only had the opportunity of printing it!

I have stated that Varanese was the fancy name of Betty Kirkham. As such it appears in the quotations about to be given from the correspondence, sometimes being indicated under the initial V., sometimes as Var., and again as V^{nese}.

This correspondence has never been published in its integrity, but considerable extracts from it will be found in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for 1863, at pp. 134–139, and 211–217, and Mr. Tyerman has printed some portions of it. By the kindness of my honoured friend, the late Rev. Dr. Hoole,[1] I was favoured with the opportunity of consulting the whole, and using it for the purposes of this publication.

[1] For many years one of the secretaries of the Wesleyan Missionary Society.

What strikes one as most remarkable in this correspondence is, the variation of character which the warm and tender admiration for such a woman as Mrs. Pendarves seems to work in Wesley. He, of course, had seen little of the world. His home was amid the uncultured rusticity of Epworth and Wroote. At college his means had not allowed him to mix with general society before his fellowship, and after his fellowship his seriousness had prevented his mingling with the fashionable. But at Stanton, at his friend Kirkham's home, he had, no doubt, been introduced to the Granville family There he had met with Mrs. Pendarves, a brilliant lady of the Court, familiar with all that rank and fashion could display, yet sweet and modest, intelligent and inquiring; as happy in country life as if she had never known a Court or shone in the assemblies of London; as if the assembly and the opera were altogether strange to her; and, above all, interested and concerned about matters of religious devotion and duty. It is no wonder if the young collegian, with a mind open to every charm of refinement and goodness, as well as to every grace of person, was altogether dazzled and subdued by such an apparition as that of Mrs. Pendarves in Stanton. Then she was affectionately and admiringly attached to the lady whom, above all others, he had esteemed and admired—to Betty Kirkham. The result was, that the Oxford fellow, tutor and clergyman, linguist and wit, logician and theologian, student and devotee, sought and obtained permission to become a correspondent of the widow; in this respect more fortunate than any other gentleman of whom we have any information. But when he undertook to write to her,

he seems to have been quite overset by the quality and accomplishments of the person to whom he had undertaken to write. In all other correspondence, before as well as after this period of his life, Wesley is always clear, neat, and parsimonious of words, simple, chaste, and unaffected. In this correspondence, on the contrary, he is stilted, sentimental, I had almost said affected, certainly unreal, certainly at times fulsome, when he has to speak of the lady herself, or attempts to turn a compliment. One almost wonders how the lady, who never forgets herself, and whose style is always natural and proper, was able to bear the style in which he addressed her. It is only when a question of religious casuistry or of theology, of duty or of devotion, is to be dealt with, that Wesley is himself again; then, his style is singularly in contrast with what it is in respect to points of personality or of sentiment. His expressions of regard and admiration are as high-flown as if they belonged to a Spanish romance; his discussions are clear and close. It is hard to understand how the same man could be the writer of all these letters.

I have said that the correspondence with Aspasia (Mrs. Pendarves) grew out of the relations between Wesley and Betty Kirkham, and that the fancy name of the latter was Varanese. This is shown by a letter to Wesley from his sister Martha, a sentence of which is quoted by Mr. Tyerman, and the date of which is five days later than that of the one from Kirkham to Wesley, from which I have quoted. "When I knew,' says she, "that you were just returned from Worcestershire, where, I suppose, you saw your Varanese, I then ceased to wonder at your silence, for the sight

of such a woman, 'so known, so loved,' might well make you forget me." Mr. Tyerman, however, for once has fallen short in his research as to this case, for he says, "Nothing more is known of this incipient courtship;" and also, that "Wesley soon became far too much immersed in more serious things to have time to think of wooing."[1] The correspondence with Aspasia shows that on Wesley's side, at least, there was no withdrawal from his passion for Varanese; that, years afterwards, the attachment still continued very strong; that it was not his fault if it did not lead to a life-long union; and that he could and did find time, in the midst of his most engrossing engagements, for a correspondence with the woman of his choice.[2]

It seems to have been in the summer of 1730, three years and a half after the date of Robert Kirkham's letter to Wesley about his sister, while Mrs Pendarves was spending some months in the country with her mother and sister, that Wesley first made her acquaintance; no doubt, at Stanton, at the Kirkhams'.

Wesley's first letter to her, accompanying some MS., which he had promised to send her, is dated August 14 of that year, and in this he refers to "his

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 50.

[2] In his *Oxford Methodists*, p. 2, Mr. Tyerman has, in his notice of Robert Kirkham, tacitly recognised the truth of what is written above. He seems to show that Betty Kirkham became Mrs. Wilson, and died in the summer of 1732. The question with which Mrs. Pendarves, in the letter which alludes to her death, and which is dated June 28, 1732, closes her reference to her case, shows that Mrs. Wilson must have been married some years. I should add here that the substance of this chapter was originally published in 1872, in the *London Quarterly Review*.

dear Varanese." It appears that some correspondence of hers was necessary in order to explain the MS., "the trifle," which he was sending. In reference to this he says, "While I was transcribing the letters, these last monuments of the goodness of my dear V., I could not hinder some sighs which, between grief and shame, would have their way. Not that I was so much pained at seeing my utmost efforts outdone by another's pen, but I could not, I ought not, to be unmoved when I observe how unworthy I am of that excellent means of improvement, etc. I trust so unusual a blessing of Providence has not been utterly useless to me. To this I owe both the capacity and the occasion of feeling that soft emotion with which I glow even at the moment when I consider myself as conversing with a kindred soul of my V"

In a later letter (September 14th) he says, "My dear V informs me you are going yet farther from us, but cannot inform me how soon." On the 12th of October, Mrs. Pendarves (Aspasia), writing to him from Gloucester, speaks of "our inimitable dear V.," and longs for her ability to write on high and serious subjects. On the 19th of November, apologising for her infrequent writing, she says, "I have not had time even to write to V" In a letter dated Innocents' Day following, Cyrus thus significantly expresses himself: "While I am reflecting on this, I can't but often observe with pleasure the great resemblance between the emotion I then feel and that with which my heart frequently overflowed in the beginning of my intercourse with our dear V Yet is there a sort of soft melancholy mixed with it, when I perceive that I am making another avenue for grief—that I

am laying open another part of my soul, at which the arrows of fortune may enter." There follows much more soft meandering around the same subject, and to a similar effect.

On the 11th January following he refers again to the advantage he has enjoyed in "the friendship of our V." Under date April 4, following, Aspasia refers to "dear V.," and to being "denied the happiness and advantage of conversing with such a friend." And, a few days later, Cyrus, after referring to "dear V.," adds, most suggestively, "Why it is that I am not allowed a stricter intercourse with such a friend, is a question I could never fully answer but by another: why is my intercourse with such a friend as Aspasia or Selina allowed?" Selina, I remark in passing, here as elsewhere in the correspondence, is decorously joined in society with Aspasia, as Araspes is with Cyrus.[1] But this is a very transparent artifice of correspondence. So he desires, in another letter, to "shelter himself under the protection of V., and Aspasia and Selina."

In the early summer of 1731, Wesley met V., somewhere on a visit, probably at Stanton, where he may have been over from Oxford "doing duty." He writes in regard to this visit to Aspasia as follows: "You will easily judge whether the remembrance of Aspasia made that entertainment in particular less agreeable which I enjoyed last week, in the almost uninterrupted conversation of dear V 'On this spot

[1] For example: "The esteem of Araspes as well as Cyrus must ever attend both Aspasia and Selina." This is a *P.S.* to a letter from Cyrus. So the lady closes one of her letters thus: "Araspes may justly claim our service and esteem. Selina joins with Aspasia in being to Cyrus a FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED FRIEND."

she sat,' 'along this path she walked,' 'here she showed that lovely instance of condescension,' were reflections which, though extremely obvious, could not but be equally pleasing, and gave a new degree of beauty to the charming arbour, the fields, the meadows, and Horrel (?) itself." In her reply she says: "I will not say I envied either Va. or Cyrus those moments they passed together; but happy should I have been to have shared them with you. How I please myself with the thought that I was not quite forgot at that interview. Perhaps I was wished for." In one place the passionate religious fervour of Varanese is shown by some words which Wesley quotes from her. "I do not wonder," he says, "that Aspasia is thus minded, any more than I did at the temper of dear V[illegible] under the sharpest pain that an embodied spirit can know. You will easily take knowledge of those words, if you have not heard them before: 'When I was in the greatest of my pains, if my strength would have allowed, I would gladly have run out into the streets to warn all I met that they should save themselves from pain sharper than mine.'" [1]

Mrs. Pendarves was three years older than Wesley, and was, it is evident enough, regarded by her country friends as a sort of superior being. When she allowed the correspondence to begin, she probably had no idea that any warm affections would be stirred in the course of it. Wesley's earliest effusions, however,

[1] From several references in the letters, it would appear that Varanese was by no means an habitual sufferer from illness or pain, but enjoyed good ordinary health. The date of the letter last quoted is July 21th, 1731. A year later, the lady—then, and also at the date of the letter quoted, Mrs. Wilson—had died altogether unexpectedly.

must have excited in her some suspicion as to how matters might turn; and, before the correspondence came to an end, it would seem that a tone of decidedly warmer, more natural, and more confidential friendship gave character to her letters. Her own religious sensibilities, besides, were more awakened; and, as she became more earnest and confidential, the power of Wesley's writing greatly grew. There can be no doubt that he did at one time cherish the aspiration that Mrs. Pendarves might join her lot with his. Her second husband was an Irish dean and divine, neither so well born and bred nor so distinguished or useful a man as Wesley. But Wesley, wedded in 1732 to Mrs. Pendarves, might have become a very different man from what he did become. The following passage in a long letter of Wesley's, dated July 24, 1731, is the nearest approach to a proposal of marriage contained in this correspondence. One broad hint has been quoted already. The passage now to be quoted is evidently an argument to detach Mrs. Pendarves from fashionable life.

"Is it no hurt to rob you of your time, for which there is no equivalent but eternity? on the use of every moment of which more than a world depends? to turn your very sweetness of temper against you? on this very account to encroach on you with so much cruelty? to force you to stand still so many hours, when you are most ardent to press forward?—nay, to strike whole days out of your existence, while He that sitteth in heaven sees that all the kingdoms He hath made are vile compared to the worth of one particle of them! O God, hath Thy wisdom prepared a remedy for every evil under the sun? and is there

none for this? Must Aspasia ever submit to this insupportable misfortune? Every time a gay wretch wants to trifle away part of that invaluable treasure which Thou hast lent him, shall he force away a part of hers too? tear another star from her crown of glory? O, 'tis too much, indeed! Surely there is a way to escape; the God whom you serve point it out to you!"

This was certainly opening the way skilfully and clearly for future advances, if due responsiveness had been shown by the lady. Her next letter, like the one preceding, is warmly kind and religiously earnest, by no means likely to discourage her correspondent. The one following, dated August 26, was written just on the eve of her journey and voyage to Ireland, and is still very kind, although, in the postscript, a stringent injunction is given, not the first she had given of the same kind in her postscripts, that all her letters should be burned, and that Cyrus should make use of no epithet before her name. This letter Wesley answered at length (September 28), but received no reply. It can hardly be doubted that he wrote other letters afterwards not contained in this series, for he often wrote two letters for her one; and he was the more likely to do so as she was in Ireland, and as the direction in her last had been, "When you write to me, which I hope will be soon, direct your letter to my sister at Gloucester, and she will take care to convey it to me." But he still received no reply, though many months had passed away. Writing to her sister from Dublin the following spring (March 11), when nearly six months had passed away, she says:—

"Cyrus by this time has blotted me out of his memory; or, if he does remember me, it can only be to reproach me. What can I say *for* myself? What can I indeed say *to myself*, that have neglected so extraordinary a correspondent? I only am the sufferer, but I should be very sorry to have him think my silence proceeded from negligence. I declare 'tis want of time! Then there's poor Sally,[1] too, who I think of every day, but cannot find a moment to tell her so; though soon I will endeavour to acquit myself in a proper manner to them both. I can't put myself into better hands for making an excuse for me than yours."[2]

Precisely twelve months later, in another letter to her sister, still from Ireland, she thus writes:—

"As for the ridicule Cyrus has been exposed to, I do not at all wonder at it. Religion in its plainest dress suffers daily from the insolence and ignorance of the world; then how should that person escape who dares to appear openly in its cause? He will meet with all the mortification such rebels are able to give, which can be no other than that of finding them wilfully blinding themselves, and running headlong into the gulf of perdition—a melancholy prospect for the honest-hearted man who earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow-creatures."[3]

It was not, however, till the summer of 1734, after an interval of nearly three years, that Mrs. Pendarves found time to write to her Oxford friend. By this time she had returned to England. Her first words

[1] Mrs. Chapone.
[2] *Mrs. Delany's Life and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 343.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 410.

indicate the feeling of the letter:—"I never began a letter with so much confusion to anybody as I do this to Cyrus." Her apologies are deep, and no doubt sincere. She had "at last broken through" the shame and reluctance to write which her long delay and neglect had produced, and was ready to "suffer any reproach rather than lose the advantage of Cyrus's friendship." Things, however, had gone too far; and the Cyrus of 1734 was a man of stronger character and more experience, as well as of wider influence and of higher position as a spiritual teacher and leader, than the Cyrus of 1731. He will not renew the correspondence, and it may be doubted whether Cyrus and Aspasia ever met again.[1] His voyage to America soon intervened, and the whole colour of his life was completely changed.

The contrast between the beginning and the end of this correspondence is striking, and suggests that a great development had in the meantime taken place in Wesley's character. The first letter of all bears the signature "J. W.," and begins with the formal "Madam" of the time. It is tolerably sentimental and high-flown; but it is nothing to the second, which is addressed to Aspasia, and which properly begins the Cyrus and Aspasia series. We transcribe a part of it, observing only that it is in reply to one from Aspasia, in which she acknowledged the MS. and letters he had sent her with his first. First he thanks her in elaborate circumlocution for her letter to him —a letter complimentary, indeed, but destitute of any real matter or genuine thought whatever—and then proceeds:—

[1] *Mrs. Delany's Life and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 175.

"It convinces me that it was possible I should enjoy a higher pleasure than even your conversation gave me. If your understanding could not appear in stronger light than when it brightened the dear hill, the fields, the arbour, I am now forced to confess your temper could. You even then showed but half your goodness.

"I spent some very agreeable moments last night in musing on this delightful subject, and thinking to how little disadvantage Aspasia or Selina would have appeared even in that faint light which the moon, glimmering through the trees, poured on that part of our garden in which I was walking. How little would the eye of the mind that surveyed them have missed the absent sun! What darkness could have obscured gentleness, courtesy, humility—could have shaded the image of God! Sure none but that which shall never dare to approach them; none but vice, which shall ever be far away!"

Such compliments as these are singularly elaborate, and cumbrous and obscure; but yet John Wesley, the master of simple manliness of style, wrote this and much more, in the following letters, not inferior in its kind. Such was Wesley in 1730 and 1731, as a "squire of dames," and, in particular, as the fascinated admirer of Mrs. Pendarves. In one place he even goes so far as to place his orthodoxy in question when paying his excessive tribute to this lady. "Though," he says, "I would fain be nearer you, though I do what I can (I fear not always) to overtake you, yet so hard is it to lay aside every weight—these follies do so easily beset me—that I find it will not be—the penitent cannot avoid being

left behind by the innocent!" The date of this notable sentiment is July 24, 1731, twelve months after the first acquaintance. It occurs in a long, earnest, religious, and, on the whole, impressive letter. The following sentiments in an earlier letter (October 24, 1730), also appear to be very curious in an Oxford clergyman and fellow—an Oxford tutor and religious leader:—

"What the advantage of being present with you must be, may be easily conceived from what you do even when absent. To your good wishes I can't but, in a great measure, impute it that we should exactly find our way through a country in which we were utter strangers, and for some miles without either human creature or day or moon or stars to direct us. By so many ties of interest as well as gratitude am I obliged, whether present or absent, to be, Madam, your most obliged and most obedient servant."

Such was the style in which Wesley had paid his epistolary court to Mrs. Pendarves. Of course there was more substantial matter than such as I have quoted. Some of the letters discuss at length questions of religious duty and religious experience, and there is not a little earnest religious exhortation. But yet such writing as I have lately quoted occupies a large space in this correspondence. The letter, closing the correspondence, written by Wesley in 1734, in reply to Mrs. Pendarves' letter of profound apology, shows a higher style of writing, and much more dignity of character.

"Alas, Aspasia!" he rejoins, "are you indeed convinced that I can be of any service to you? I fear you have not sufficient ground for such a conviction.

Experience has shown how much my power is short of my will. For some time I flattered myself with the pleasing hope, but I grew more and more ashamed of having indulged it. You need not the support of so weak a hand. How can I possibly think you do (though that thought tries now and then to intrude itself still), since you have so long and resolutely thrust it from you? I dare not, therefore, blame you for so doing. Doubtless you acted upon cool reflection. You declined the trouble of writing, not because it was a trouble, but because it was a needless one. And if so, what injury have you done yourself? As for me, you do me no injury by your silence. It did indeed deprive me of much pleasure, and of a pleasure from which I ought to have received much improvement. But still, as it was one I had no title to but your goodness, to withdraw it was no injustice. I sincerely thank you for what is past; and may the God of my salvation return it sevenfold into your bosom! And if ever you should please to add to those thousand obligations any new ones, I trust they shall neither be unrewarded by Him nor unworthily received by Aspasia's faithful friend and servant, CYRUS.—Araspes, too, hopes you will never have reason to tax him with ingratitude. Adieu!"

Mr. Tyerman (as I have intimated) misses the full meaning of this interesting and suggestive episode in Wesley's life. He quotes, indeed, Aspasia's first letter in full, as published in the *Wesleyan Times* in 1866; and he adds the interesting fact that on the fly-leaf of that letter Selina added a *P.S.*, informing Wesley that her sister was about to visit Bath, and intimating to him that he had best write to her

to ascertain her movements; telling him also that Varanese had sent him a letter by the carrier a fortnight before, and wished to know whether it had come safe to hand. But he quite misinterprets the latter part of the letter from Aspasia. Aspasia writes: "If you have any affairs that call you to Gloucester, don't forget that you have two pupils who are desirous of improving their understanding, and that friendship has already taught them to be, sir, your most sincere, humble servants. My companion joins me in all I have said, as well as in service to Araspes." The "companion," Mr. Tyerman says, was probably Mrs. Granville (with whom also Wesley corresponded [1]), or Sarah Kirkham. But there is no evidence that Wesley had any particular friendship with Sarah Kirkham, who had, indeed, for years, been Mrs. Capon, Capoon, or Chapone, and Mrs. Granville is clearly out of the question. The "companion" is evidently the other "pupil," and that other was Aspasia's sister Selina.

I have dwelt thus at length upon this correspondence, not merely because of the curious interest which attaches to the letters, but because it reveals a background of natural character which enables us to see in a much truer light the matured, and in good part transformed, Wesley of later years. It reveals to us the extreme natural susceptibility of Wesley to whatever was graceful and amiable in woman, especially if united to mental vigour and moral excellence. He had been brought up in the society of clever and virtuous women, his sisters; and it seems as if he

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 75. *Mrs. Delany's Life and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 269. The date of the one letter to Mrs. Granville, of which we have any knowledge, is "Lincoln College, December 12, 1730."

could at no time of his life dispense with the exquisite and stimulating pleasure which he found in female society and correspondence. He was naturally a woman-worshipper—at least, a worshipper of such women. An almost reverent courtesy, a warm but pure affection, a delicate but close familiarity, marked through life his relations with the good and gifted women—gifted they were, for the most part—with whom he maintained friendship and correspondence. If Miss Wedgwood had been aware of this fact, her estimate of Wesley's character would have been different at some points from that which she has given to the world.[1]

[1] In illustration of what is written above, see *Alexander Knox's Remains*, vol. iii. pp. 478–9. In one of the later chapters of this book, writing of Wesley's "disposition and character" (p. 205), I have quoted this passage, which I had not as yet seen when I wrote and first published the foregoing pages.

CHAPTER IV

WESLEY'S THEOLOGICAL VIEWS AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER AT OXFORD, 1731–1735.

I MUST not pass away from the subject of Mr. Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves, without saying a few words as to the light which the letters throw upon the stage of development at which Wesley had arrived in his doctrinal views at the time (1730–1731) when they were written. As we have only, besides, a somewhat insignificant sermon or two of this period from which to draw our inferences, they are, in this point of view, very welcome to the student of Wesley's character in its whole unfolding.

I may say, then, in general, that the theology of these letters is utterly unevangelical. There is in them very little savour of Christ's presence; there is absolutely nothing of the righteousness of faith. The way to holiness and happiness is the use of the "instituted" means; all these should be continually used—used to the full—because the more means are made use of the more grace must needs come to the teachable and humble Christian who uses them. But of Christ and of faith there is nothing. A servile legalism — a plodding ritualism, which the performer must have continually felt to be liable

to degenerate into perfunctoriness — constitutes the whole "way of salvation." Aspasia mentions a case of religious distress in a female friend of hers. Wesley recommends the diligent use of all the means of grace—the "instituted" means—as a remedy for her state. Aspasia rejoins that she had already tried these and was none the better, but rather the worse. Her spiritual adviser had no genuine remedy to prescribe for such a case as this. He was a "miserable comforter" and an ignorant physician. Cases of casuistry as to Sunday employments and some other matters Wesley discussed, and more or less resolved with no little skill. His view of religious consecration, too, was high. But of evangelical faith and experience he knew nothing. Further evidence as to Wesley's theological views at this period of his life is afforded by several sermons which, although not printed at the time, were printed many years afterwards, at various times, in the *Methodist Magazine*, and of which some account is given by Mr. Tyerman. From these it appears that Wesley taught between 1731 and 1734 a high doctrine of Christian holiness, both active and passive; that he taught the duty of at least weekly, if not also, when circumstances allowed, of daily communion; and that, though he does not seem to have claimed the power and prerogative of absolution, he appears to have taught the duty of something near akin to confession as a preparation for the Communion; that he also would have had the wine in the Holy Communion mixed with water; but that he did not entertain any such view respecting the real and corporeal presence, in or under the sacramental elements, of the incarnate

Christ, whether by transubstantiation or consubstantiation, as is now taught by High Anglicans. On the point of confession, Mr. Tyerman quotes a very racy passage from a letter of Wesley's elder sister Emily, to whose love for her brother I have already referred:—

"To lay open the state of my soul to you, or any of our clergy, is what I have no inclination to do at present; and I believe I never shall. I shall not put my conscience under the direction of mortal man frail as myself. To my own Master I stand or fall. Nay, I scruple not to say that all such desire in you or any other ecclesiastic seems to me like Church tyranny, and assuming to yourselves a dominion over your fellow-creatures which was never designed you by God. I further own that I do not hold frequent communion necessary to salvation, nor a means of Christian perfection. But do not mistake my meaning: I only think communing every Sunday, or very frequently, lessens our veneration for that sacred ordinance, and consequently our profiting by it."[1]

There speaks out the keen common sense of the eldest of the Wesley sisters, couched in the admirable English, pure, clear, and strong, which the whole family seem to have caught from their mother. Emily would not make a father-confessor of her younger brother or of any man. She had not only Puritan blood in her veins, but some of the Puritan spirit for her inheritance. Wesley himself, in a passage quoted by his biographer, has truly pointed out what were the essential defects of his theology and his preaching from 1725 onward, so long as he

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 94.

remained at Oxford: "From the year 1725 to 1729 I preached much, but saw no fruit of my labour. Indeed, it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of preaching the Gospel, taking it for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance. From the year 1729 to 1734, laying a deeper foundation of repentance, I saw a little fruit. But it was only a little—and no wonder: for I did not preach faith in the blood of the covenant."[1]

Wesley, indeed, went to consult a new teacher, and entered upon a new phase in the formation of his theological views, in 1732; but the new teacher was not likely to enlighten his darkness on the points to which I have referred. He visited William Law in the year named, and, on his recommendation, read the *Theologia Germanica*, Tauler's Works, and other mystic writings. Thus was Mysticism grafted on High Churchmanship. Under the influence of Law, Wesley seems to have continued until after he went to America. It was in 1726 that Law published his *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call;* and it must have been about the year 1728 or 1729 that Wesley first read these fine devotional and practical books; it was certainly before 1730.[2] When, in 1732, Wesley visited Law, the latter had just begun to be a student of the mystical writers. It appears to have been about two years later that Law entered upon his course of decided deterioration and increasing confusion, by becoming addicted to the study of Behmen.

[1] *Wesley's Works*, vol. viii. p. 468.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 99.

In one respect, Law's influence was antagonistic to the errors of externalism—the servile devotion to means and rites—in which Wesley had been ensnared. "A contemplative man," says Wesley, meaning by this contemplative man, his instructor Law, "convinced me, still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and, in several conversations, instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God." Nevertheless, the essential self-righteousness of mysticism, its real self-involution, its Christless and unevangelical character, are well shown by Wesley in his criticism of Law's teaching, which immediately follows what we have just quoted. After saying that Law's teachings, in reality, went to discourage him from doing outward works at all (as is the inevitable tendency of all mysticism), he adds, "He recommended (to supply what was wanting in them) mental prayer and like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul and uniting it with God. Now these were, in truth, as much my own works as visiting the sick or clothing the naked; and the union with God, thus pursued, was as really my own righteousness as any I had before pursued under another name." [1]

Law's semi-mysticism, however, was at least, under Providence, one means of delivering Wesley from the excessive traditionalism in which he had been entangled.

"I bent the bow," he himself says, "too far in that direction, by making antiquity a co-ordinate, rather than a subordinate, rule with Scripture; by admitting

[1] *Works*, vol. i. p. 100.

several doubtful writings; by extending antiquity too far; by believing more practices to have been universal in the ancient Church than ever were so; by not considering that the decrees of a provincial synod could bind only that province, and the decrees of a general synod only those provinces whose representatives met therein; that most of those decrees were adapted to particular times and occasions, and consequently, when those occasions ceased, must cease to bind even those provinces." "These considerations," Wesley adds, "insensibly stole upon me as I grew acquainted with the mystic writers, whose noble descriptions of union with God, and internal religion, made everything else appear mean, flat, and insipid. But, in truth, they make good works appear so too."[1]

When and how Wesley was brought finally to abandon mysticism, does not appear to be determinable with precision; but it would seem to have been during, or soon after, his voyage to Georgia, as a missionary of the Propagation Society, in 1735. For some year or two previously, his opinions and practices must have been a singular amalgam of High Church ritualism and of mysticism, in which the contemplative tendency and the strenuous and incessant devotion to rites or means and "good works," as the necessary vehicles and exercise of holiness, united in an asceticism at once severe and suave. Rapt abstraction, inward continual prayer, frequent ejaculations, constant attendance at prayers (notwithstanding some temptations to omit the duty as merely an outward work), daily communion, unceasing works of charity, and, in the intervals, close study in many

[1] Southey's *Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 94.

branches of learning, English and foreign, but especially theology and ecclesiastical history, would seem to have made up the life, from day to day, of Wesley and those original Methodists who placed themselves under his guidance.

"In this refined way," he says, "of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness (so zealously inculcated by the mystic writers), I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein, till the time of my leaving England. Some change, however, seems to have begun on shipboard, where, he says, "I was again active in outward works." He also learned much from the Moravian emigrants who were his companions on the voyage, although, he says, "I understood it not at the first; I was too learned and too wise." Nevertheless, he was more or less under the old influences all the time he remained in Georgia. "All the time I was at Savannah," he says, "I was thus beating the air. I continued preaching, and following after, and trusting in, that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified."[1]

In the other account we have from his own pen, written on his return to England, of the experiences through which he had passed, he describes his state during these years, and his deliverance from it, as follows:—

"Though I could never fully come into this" (the quietness of mysticism), "nor contentedly omit what God enjoined, yet, I know not how, I fluctuated between obedience and disobedience. I had no heart, no vigour, no zeal in obeying, continually doubting whether I was right or wrong, and never out of perplexities and

[1] *Works*, vol. i. p. 100.

entanglements. Nor can I at this hour give a distinct account how I came back a little toward the right way; only my present sense is this—all the other enemies of Christianity are triflers; the mystics[1] are the most dangerous; they stab it in the vitals, and its most serious professors are most likely to fall by them."[2]

So Wesley wrote in the beginning of 1738, on his return from America. What has now been shown is the interior view of his character and experience. I shall proceed to give a view of him as seen from the exterior by an intimate and gifted Christian friend.

But I must first recapitulate a few dates and facts, as mementoes of an often-told history of which the interesting and instructive details are very fully given by Mr. Tyerman.

During Wesley's absence from college in 1727, while he was serving his father's rectory of Wroote, his brother Charles (then at Christchurch) had become serious, and he and a few serious undergraduates began to meet and consort together. This company it was which, in the absence of John, was first nicknamed

[1] On November 23, 1736, twelve months after his leaving England, Wesley wrote a letter to his brother Samuel, in which he gives an admirable scheme (in brief) of the mystic doctrines, and asks his brother's "thoughts" upon them. It would appear that, at that time, he had but lately made his escape from these subtleties, which, though Mr. Tyerman speaks of them as "mystified balderdash," have led astray many hearts and minds of the finest quality. "I think," he says, in introducing the subject to his brother, "the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the Mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace." It is evident, also, from the style of his earnest application to his brother, that, even as he wrote them, he felt the power of the mystic spell.—Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 133.

[2] Southey's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 112.

variously as Sacramentarians, Bible Bigots, Bible Moths, the Holy or the Godly Club, and, finally, Methodists. Returning to Oxford in November, 1729, at the request of the authorities, to become a college tutor, John Wesley was immediately placed at the head of this company, being styled the Father of the Holy Club. Whitefield, Hervey, Robert Kirkham, and poor Morgan, who died very soon afterwards, were among the earliest members of this society.[1] Mr. Gambold also, afterwards a Moravian bishop, a man both of deep piety and of fine poetic genius, became a member of it. The best picture extant of what Wesley was at this time, the view to which I have referred above, is that delineated by Gambold after Wesley had sailed to Georgia. It was given in a letter addressed to a member of Wesley's family. After stating how he became acquainted with Charles Wesley, how Charles Wesley took him to his brother, the profound deference and unbounded and tender affection which Charles ever showed toward John, the part which Mr. Morgan had in suggesting the society out of which Methodism arose, and that the two Wesleys and Morgan were the first members of that society, Gambold further proceeds:—

"Mr. John Wesley was always the chief manager, for which he was very fit. For he had not only more learning and experience than the rest, but he was blessed with such activity as to be always gaining ground, and such steadiness that he lost none; what proposals he made to any were sure to alarm them, because he was so much in earnest; nor could they afterwards slight them, because they saw him always

[1] For an exhaustive account of all the original Methodists, see Tyerman's *Oxford Methodists*.

the same. What supported this uniform vigour was the care he took to consider well of every affair before he engaged in it, making all his decisions in the fear of God, without passion, humour, or self-confidence; for though he had naturally a very clear apprehension, yet his exact prudence depended more on honesty and singleness of heart. To this I may add that he had, I think, something of authority in his countenance. Yet he never assumed any to himself above his companions; any of them might speak their mind, and their wishes were as strictly regarded by him as his were by them.

They took great pains with the younger members of the University, to rescue them from bad company, and to encourage them in a sober, studious life. When they had some interest with any such, they would get them to breakfast, and over a dish of tea endeavour to fasten some good hint upon them; they would bring them acquainted with other well-disposed young men; they would help them in those parts of learning which they stuck at; they would close with their best sentiments, drive home their convictions, give them rules of piety when they could receive them, and watch over them with great tenderness."

After describing their works of Christian love and zeal, especially in visiting the prisons and dealing with the prisoners, in instructing poor ignorant children and relieving the poor, their fasting twice weekly, and their weekly communion, Mr. Gambold proceeds:—

"They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them; but if they made any reply, it was commonly such a plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case but that they had just heard some doctrines of their Saviour, and had believed

and done accordingly. He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else, and I have often seen him come out of his closet with a serenity that was next to shining; it discovered where he had been, and gave me double hope of receiving wise direction in the matter about which I came to consult him. He used many arts to be religious, but none to seem so; with a soul always upon the stretch, and a most transparent sincerity, he addicted himself to every good word and work. He is now gone to Georgia as a missionary. A family picture of him his relations may be allowed to keep by them. And this is the idea of Mr. Wesley which I cherish for the service of my own soul, and which I take the liberty likewise to deposit with you." [1]

Such was Wesley, the Oxford Methodist.

[1] Part of this letter was quoted in Whitehead's *Life of Wesley*. Dr. Hoole had, and allowed me to use, a copy of the original transcribed from the short-hand.

CHAPTER V

WESLEY IN GEORGIA—MISS HOPKEY.

I MUST bring this part of my study to a close, by some remarks, in this and the following chapter, on Wesley's Georgian history. It lasted two years and four months from the time of his leaving till the time of his returning to this country, his departure on his voyage being from Gravesend, on October 21, 1735; his return to Deal on February 1, 1738. Of the voyages out and back I shall say nothing at this time; although the outward voyage, in the course of which Wesley was introduced for the first time into Moravian fellowship, produced, as all the world knows, a critical effect in the development of his views and character, and led on to the connection with Böhler, which was the means of working in him so profound and far-reaching a change of spirit and principles. The chief matter of general human interest in Wesley's Georgian history was his disappointment in love with Miss Sophia Hopkey, the niece of Mr. Causton, the magistrate of the colony. Into this, however, I shall not go in detail, because the story is well known, and Mr. Tyerman has told all about it very plainly, and more fully than it was ever told before. There is one point, however, as to which I must say a few words. Henry Moore, in his *Life of Wesley*, has a version of

one part of this affair, which he professes to have learned from Wesley himself in full distinctness, and according to which Wesley never actually proposed marriage to Miss Hopkey. Mr. Tyerman most unceremoniously discredits this version as wholly unworthy of reliance and as "painfully ludicrous." I confess I cannot accept this "short and easy method" of dealing with Moore's testimony as to Wesley's own account. I think a little considerate attention given to the matter would have prevented Mr. Tyerman from making so unceremonious an attack on the credit of either John Wesley or Henry Moore, and have shown him that there is really no contradiction between the sentences which he quotes from Wesley's private diary and the statement of Henry Moore. I should weave the two accounts into one consistent statement in some such way as follows:—

The young chaplain and "ordinary" of the province of Georgia—a clergyman and a gentleman, and withal a man of handsome personal appearance, notwithstanding his smallness of stature—comes to Savannah. Who so likely as he to attract the attention of the magistrate's niece, resident in the magistrate's family? Was he not, next to Governor Oglethorpe, the best gentleman in the colony, and in influence, after the governor, only second to her uncle, the magistrate? From the first, she makes him her mark. He has a long and dangerous illness; she waits upon him continually, night and day. He has special and dainty taste in dress; the Horatian "*simplex munditiis*" expresses his standard of propriety and grace, regarding the matter either as a gentleman or a Christian; simplicity becomes accordingly her law, and she appears

in plain but graceful white before him continually. He is a devotee, and she becomes devout. She wins the minister's heart by her regular attendance at his early morning service, and by taking to light suppers and early hours at night under his advice. She becomes his penitent, and repairs to him when proposing to take the Communion. *Quid multa?* We know how unsuspicious and how susceptible to feminine attraction and charm Wesley was; here was all that he could desire, "the very handmaiden of the Lord." Wesley is deeply in love. Meantime, others have clearer eyes than the fascinated chaplain; something is known of Miss Hopkey's inner woman; she has, in effect, courted the minister, and he is about to fall under the arts of an attractive but unsuitable woman. Delamotte, his brother collegian and brother Methodist, his companion and friend, gives a word of warning to Wesley. Delamotte also lays the matter before the Moravian elders, a venerable body in the eyes of the teachable and single-minded chaplain. These express their judgment that his marriage with this lady would be against the will of God. Wesley, overawed, says, "The will of the Lord be done," and goes away convinced, for the time at least, that it would be wrong in him to prosecute this connection any further.

In all this I can see nothing but what was perfectly natural under the circumstances; especially considering how Wesley was accustomed, at that time, and for years afterwards, to defer to what he regarded as the determinations of Providence, sometimes given in the way of impressions, and sometimes of the lot, and still more to the combined judgment and conclusion of wise and good men. He had been accustomed to act in

this spirit at Oxford, and to instruct others to do the like.

I conceive that what followed was probably something like this. Wesley became more constrained in his manner, and intermitted his attentions. Miss Hopkey hears some rumour of consultations with the Moravians, touching her affair. She discovers, at the same time, that Wesley's ritualistic requirements are somewhat too severe for her taste and powers. Another admirer is in the field, and she at once discards her clerical lover. Wesley, notwithstanding what had occurred, had never lost his own love for the lady, and is grieved accordingly. Nevertheless, he had been thinking that it was his duty to give up the connection, although he had not been able to gather courage to let her understand his feeling; and so the affair ends. All this surely is quite consistent with Henry Moore's statement, that there had never been any definite proposal on Wesley's part. If there had been, it is certain that it would have been made in the first instance to Mr. Causton, the young lady's guardian. Clergymen of Wesley's character and position did not, in those days, slip out proposals of marriage informally and privately to the ward or daughter in the first instance. They addressed themselves, and were bound to address themselves, in the first instance and with all formality, to the parent or guardian. The undoubted fact is, that no proposal of marriage to Miss Hopkey was ever addressed by Wesley to her uncle, and that no charge of dishonourable conduct or of breach of engagement was ever preferred against Wesley, either by Miss Hopkey or by Mr. Causton: these considerations settle the question for us. Mr. Tyerman himself

informs us that before the grand jury Mrs. Williamson "was called, but acknowledged, in the course of her examination, that she had no objection to Wesley's behaviour previous to her marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Causton were also examined; when the former confessed that, if Mr. Wesley had asked his consent to marry his niece, he would not have refused it." [1]

It is plain enough that Wesley's great offence was, that he did *not* propose. His hesitation lost him Miss Hopkey—a loss which, no doubt, was a real gain and blessing. Mr. Moore's account is not "painfully ludicrous," but is well sustained by all the evidence. It is sustained, indeed, by the very passages which Mr. Tyerman quotes from the unpublished Journal. Here is one—

"*February 5th*, 1737.—One of the most remarkable dispensations of Providence toward me began to show itself this day. For many days after, I could not at all judge which way the scale would turn; nor was it fully determined till March 4th, on which day God commanded me to pull out my right eye; and, by His grace, I determined to do so, but, being slack in the execution, on Saturday, March 12th, God being very merciful to me, my friend performed what I could not."

The meaning of this is not hard to decipher. Delamotte had spoken to Wesley, as Moore relates, and Wesley felt bound to take advice. He did take advice with David Nitzchmann, the Moravian Bishop, as Moore also relates, and his answer was dubious, suggesting grave caution and deliberation. After a month thus passed in painful irresolution, on the 4th

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 156.

of March, Nitzchmann communicates to Wesley the judgment of his fellow-elders—I have no doubt a most sound judgment—that he ought not to marry Wesley receives this as from the Lord, and determines to carry it out, but is "slack in the execution." On the 8th, the matter being blown abroad in gossiping Savannah, Miss Hopkey takes her revenge by engaging herself to an altogether unworthy person. On the 7th, as we learn from the Diary, Wesley had walked with Causton "to his country lot," and had greatly admired the place, but had made no overture of marriage. Wesley's entry in regard to the marriage is as follows:—

"*March 8th.*—Miss Sophy engaged herself to Mr. Williamson, a person not remarkable for handsomeness, neither for greatness, neither for wit, nor knowledge, nor sense, and least of all for religion; and on Saturday, March 12th, they were married at Parrysbury—this being the day which completed the year from my first speaking to her. What Thou doest, O God, I know not now, but I shall know hereafter."

That he had tenderly loved Miss Hopkey is certain; equally evident it is that he must have been a somewhat trying and not easily comprehensible suitor, especially to a vain young lady; and the hasty marriage shows how bitterly she resented his indecision, and the slight which she conceived herself to have suffered. Forty-nine years afterwards, as Mr. Tyerman reminds us, he wrote, in reference to this event: "I remember when I read these words in the church at Savannah, 'Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke,' I was pierced through as with a sword, and could not utter

a word more. But our comfort is that He that made the heart can heal the heart."

Such was the unprosperous issue of Wesley's third love affair. He was not, it must be confessed, fortunate in these matters; but they illustrate very strongly the real nature of the man. He was susceptible, to weakness, in presence of female attractions, but he was always delicate and honourable in his feelings and conduct. On the whole, we cannot but love our Wesley the better for these revelations. At the same time, it is a matter of regret that Mr. Tyerman has so inadequately rendered them, as he has, in my judgment, inadequately and inapprehensively represented, throughout his volumes, Wesley's relations of affection and confidence with women.

This matter, as many of my readers know, and all may fully know by consulting Mr. Tyerman's interesting pages, was the beginning of troubles to Wesley. The worldly and wicked members of the colony—and, in such a colony as Georgia was, these could not but be the majority—had now the magistrate and his family on their side. A suit at law was brought against him, which, however, completely broke down, and Wesley saw that his only course was to leave the colony—"a sadder and a wiser man" than he entered it.

CHAPTER VI.

WESLEY'S RELIGIOUS OPINIONS AND CHARACTER IN GEORGIA.

FROM the public indictment against Wesley in the Savannah Court, and his own testimony or comments in his Diary, we know what sort of a Churchman he was in Georgia. The resemblance of his practices to those of modern High Anglicans is, in most points, exceedingly striking. He had early, and also forenoon, service every day; he divided the morning service, taking the Litany as a separate service; he inculcated fasting (real, hard fasting, his was), and something scarcely to be distinguished from confession, as a preparation for communion. He made a point of the celebration of the Lord's Supper weekly; he refused the Lord's Supper to all who had not been episcopally baptized; he insisted on baptism by immersion; he re-baptized the children of Dissenters; and he refused to bury all who had not received episcopalian baptism. One thing, however, was wanting to make the parallel with our moderns complete: there is no evidence that he believed in the conversion of the elements by consecration, or in their doctrine of the "real presence."[1]

[1] It is well known that Wesley refused the Lord's Supper to one of the most exemplary Christians in the colony, Belzius or Bolzius, the pastor

But, at the same time that he was in some respects an intolerant High Church ritualist, he was inwardly melting, and the light of spiritual liberty was dawning on his soul. He attended the Presbyterian service at Darien, heard Mr. M'Leod, the minister, to his great astonishment, offer an extemporary prayer and preach a written sermon, on which fact he fails not to remark in his Diary, and was much struck by the Christian devoutness and the exemplary Christian behaviour of the people of his charge; he was continually learning from the Moravians, with all meekness; he gathered a meeting of the clergy of the Province, at which, he says in his Diary, "there was such a conversation, for several hours, on 'Christ our Righteousness and Example,' with such seriousness and closeness as I never heard in England in all the visitations I have been present at;" and he thus expresses to a friend his views respecting the innermost nature of religion:—

"I entirely agree with you that religion is love, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; that, as it is the happiest, so it is the cheerfullest thing in the world; that it is utterly inconsistent with moroseness, sourness, severity, and indeed with whatever is not according to the softness, sweetness, and gentleness of

of the Salzburghers, because he had not been, as he insisted, canonically baptized. His entry in his Journal (Sept. 30, 1749), in reference to this matter, written many years later, will not be forgotten, which ends with the words, "Can High Church bigotry go further than this? And how well have I since been beaten with mine own staff!" In regard to this matter there is the following entry in Wesley's unpublished Journal, under date Sunday, July 17, 1737: "I had occasion to make a very unusual trial of the temper of Mr. Belzius, pastor of the Salzburghers, in which he behaved with such lowliness and meekness as became a disciple of Jesus Christ." The vernacular name of this good man, it may be presumed, was Bölz.

Christ Jesus. I believe it is equally contrary to all preciseness, stiffness, affectation, and unnecessary singularity. I allow, too, that prudence, as well as zeal, is of the utmost importance in the Christian life. But I do not yet see any possible case wherein trifling conversation can be an instance of it. In the following scriptures I take all such to be flatly forbidden—Matt. xii. 36; Eph. v. 4, and iv. 29; Col. iv. 6.

"That I shall be laughed at for this, I know; so was my Master. I am not for a stern, austere manner of conversing—no: let all the cheerfulness of faith be there, all the joyfulness of hope, all the amiable sweetness, the winning easiness of love. If we must have art, '*Hæc mihi erunt artes.*'"[1]

So far distant from real Christianity does Wesley, the Georgian missionary, appear to have been, if we look only at his bigotry, his ritualism, his wearisome and punctilious externalism; so near, notwithstanding, does he come in his inner desires and in his views respecting the nature of religious experience. A similar combination, we cannot doubt, exists to-day in the case of not a few who seem not untruly to be infatuated sticklers for a servile and benighted High Anglicanism.

I have thus endeavoured, beating ground seldom trodden, and known hitherto to very few, to exhibit the living and visible humanity of Wesley, the collegian and the Oxford Anglican, before he entered into the liberty of the children of God. In the Third Part of this study I shall endeavour to illustrate the stages and the true nature of his evangelical conversion, its effects upon his character, especially as a preacher, and on his ecclesiastical spirit and views; the secret

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. p. 138.

of his extraordinary power as a preacher; his manner of work as an itinerant evangelist, and how he behaved under fiercest persecutions; how he dealt with false teachers; and in what spirit and manner he organised his societies. Of his intellectual powers, hitherto in general very imperfectly understood, his personal disposition and character as a companion and friend, his later years and the beautiful ending of his life, I shall speak in the Fourth and final Part of this study of Wesley as a living personality.

PART III

WESLEY'S CONVERSION AND HIS LIFE WORK AS AN EVANGELIST

CHAPTER I.

WESLEY'S RITUALISM AND MYSTICISM BEFORE HIS EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.

IT will be necessary, in opening what I desire now to say respecting Wesley in his mature and in his later life, that I should recapitulate some of the information contained in the former part of this volume. We left Wesley still in Georgia, but on the point of returning to England. The date was 1737–8.

Wesley had gone to Oxford in 1720, being seventeen years of age. He took his bachelor's degree in 1724. He was ordained Deacon in 1725, and elected Fellow of Lincoln College six months later, in March, 1726. He had always been a moral youth, with religious habits and predilections; but in 1725 he was deeply awakened to a sense of his want of real holiness, and began thenceforth to seek after absolute consecration to God, as the great aim of his life. The

main outline of his characteristic teaching in future life as to Christian perfection, may be traced in the views which he at this time embraced, and which he seems to have learned chiefly from Thomas à Kempis and Jeremy Taylor. In the same year, also, he settled his views in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination. About the same time, revolting at this point from Jeremy Taylor, he concluded that it must be the privilege and blessing of a Christian to know his acceptance with God.

In 1727, during Wesley's absence from Oxford at Wroote, where he was serving his father's rectory, his brother Charles became serious, and the original company of "Methodists," so designated in mockery or in pleasantry, was formed; Charles and a few like-minded friends being the members of the company. In 1730, shortly after his return to residence at Oxford, John Wesley was placed at the head of this company, being styled the Father of the Holy Club.

Wesley, as I have just stated, left Oxford in 1727, and went for a time to reside in Lincolnshire. Not long before his leaving he had visited the family of the Kirkhams, at Stanton, in Gloucestershire; and there appears, as we have seen, to have been at that time a mutual attachment between himself and Miss Betty Kirkham. Of this, however, we lose the traces for several years afterward. During those years, it is to be observed, Wesley was very far away from Gloucestershire; they were the years during which he had exchanged his university life for parochial residence and service in Lincolnshire. Possibly there may have been some reason connected with Stanton

which helped in part to keep him so long away from Oxford, though the reason was certainly not that he had become indifferent to the merits of his friend Kirkham's sister. However, to Oxford he returned, as we have noted, at the end of 1729, and became the chief of the Methodist band. In the summer of that same year he renewed his personal intercourse with the daughter of the Stanton parsonage, although without any hope of marriage being possible; indeed, it seems not unlikely that about this time she married and became Mrs. Wilson. Through his connection with her family he was about the same time introduced to Mrs. Pendarves, afterward Mrs. Delany, with whom, during several years following, he kept up the remarkable correspondence from which I have given some extracts. His last and parting letter to her was dated 1734. By that time he had learned that his way and hers through life must be separate and divergent. Three years before, he was deeply engaged to her in admiration and affection, and would most gladly have married her if he had been able. At that time she would have been a compensation to him for even the loss of his former hopes as to Miss Kirkham.

It was precisely during the interval which covers the correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves that Wesley's High Church asceticism developed itself at Oxford. He set himself conscientiously to be an Anglican Churchman, according to the prescriptions of the Rubric; and to be a devout and holy Christian, according to early ecclesiastical examples and traditions. He became, accordingly, an ascetic ritualist of the strictest and most advanced class. At this

time, to use his own words of himself, he "made antiquity a co-ordinate rule with Scripture."[1]

In 1735 he went to Georgia, and there, while inwardly the need and the attainability of a real consciousness and power of Divine love and holiness, as contradistinguished from any external services or observances, became with him a matter of deepening and almost passionate conviction, outwardly his rule of life and service seemed to become more and more forbidding and unevangelical in its legal servility, its rubrical punctiliousness, and its ascetic severity. He was almost all that a High Anglo-Catholic of the present day is understood to be, except that he seems not to have believed in the "conversion of the elements" in the eucharist.

Nevertheless, with all his punctilious Ritualism, there was curiously intermixed, during nearly the whole of these seven years (1730–1738), a strong tincture of mystical tendency and influence. This element represented the reaction, in such a true and earnest soul as Wesley's, of the inward against the merely outward. Through all his life, indeed, Wesley was resolute to maintain the union of outward godliness and religious observance with inward and spiritual contemplation and affection. But, during the period of which I am now speaking, he had not found, in the "righteousness of faith," the true *nexus* and harmony between these antithetic necessities. Hence, at this period, the intermixture of Ritualism and Mysticism,

[1] Mr. Tyerman, in his *Oxford Methodists*, has shown that it was in 1733 that Wesley, partly through the influence of his friend and fellow-Methodist, Clayton, left the guidance of the Bible to follow that of tradition, or such pretended tradition as the Apostolical Constitutions.

the oscillations from one to the other, of which we have had a view in the Second Part of this life-study. Never ceasing to be outwardly the strict and ascetic High Churchman, Wesley, in his inward sympathies and longings, found himself strongly attracted by the union of contemplation and passion in the writings of the best class of devotional mystics, and was himself often a mystic at heart. Indeed, although servile Ritualism and Mysticism are antagonistic to each other, there is a deep congeniality, as all religious history has shown, between Asceticism and Mysticism; and, accordingly, on his ascetic side, Wesley found himself verging naturally toward the school from which, as a punctilious legalist, he was repelled. Besides which, Wesley could not, even for a time, find *rest* in legalism: earnest and sincere spirits never can. Whereas Mysticism was a doctrine of rest; made fair offers to him of "quietness and assurance for ever."

It was about 1728 or 1729 that Wesley was deeply impressed by reading Law's *Christian Perfection* and *Serious Call.* The fruit of these powerful books was seen in his deepened earnestness and "Methodist" singularity of religious strictness and devotion on his return to Oxford; that is, from the beginning of the year 1730. In 1732 he paid a personal visit to Law, at Putney; and from that period seems to have begun to read the mystics, chiefly, it would appear, at first, the Germans who preceded and in part prepared the way for the Reformation, such as Tauler, and the author of the *Theologia Germanica;* but afterward, also, such French writers as Madame de Bourignon. Just as he was leaving England for Georgia, Law was going astray, wide and deep, by

plunging into the unfathomable confusions of Behmenism. Into these Wesley never followed him; but, as I have already shown, appears to have distinctly and intelligently extricated himself from the meshes of Mysticism toward the end of the year 1736, during his sojourn in Georgia. His criticism on the principles of Mysticism, given in a letter to his brother Samuel, from Georgia, under date November 23, 1736, and already referred to in a note, is worth quoting here, both for its own intrinsic value, and as a specimen of his philosophical and critical capacity at this period of his life.

"I think," he says, "the rock on which I had the nearest made shipwreck of the faith was the writings of the mystics; under which term I comprehend all, and only those, who slight any of the means of grace. I have drawn up a short scheme of their doctrines, and beg your thoughts upon it as soon as you can conveniently. Give me them as particularly, fully, and strongly as your time will permit. They may be of consequence, not only to all this Province, but to nations of Christians yet unborn.

"'All means are not necessary for all men; therefore each person must use such means, and such only, as he finds necessary for him. When the end is attained, the means cease.'

"'Men utterly divested of free-will, of self-love, and of self-activity, are entered into the passive state, and enjoy such a contemplation as is not only above faith, but above sight—such as is entirely free from images, thoughts, and discourse, and never interrupted by sins of infirmity or voluntary distractions. They have absolutely renounced their reason and under-

standing, else they could not be guided by a Divine light. They seek no clear or particular knowledge of anything; but only an obscure general knowledge, which is far better.'

"'Having thus attained the end, the means must cease. Hope is swallowed up in love; sight, or something more than sight, takes the place of faith. All particular virtues they possess in the essence, and, therefore, need not the distinct exercise of them. They work, likewise, all good works essentially, not accidentally; and use all outward means only as they are moved thereto.'

"'Public prayer, or any forms, they need not, for they pray without ceasing. Sensible devotion in any prayer they despise, it being a great hindrance to perfection. The Scripture they need not read, for it is only His letter, with whom they converse face to face.'"[1]

The one really plausible position of all that are here laid down is that set forth in the first paragraph of the summary. How much of truth there is in it, it is not my business to inquire at this moment. But I may observe that Wesley's special weakness at this time as a ritualist was in precise antithesis to this position. He taught the pernicious error which is in the opposite extreme to the no less pernicious mystical half-truth. His one prescription for the attainment of holiness and happiness was the use of "the means of grace"—of the "instituted" means. He taught that the more means are made use of, the more grace must needs come to the sincere user of them. His doctrine was a servile legalism, a plodding ritualism, less absurd, perhaps, and less open to mischievous

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. pp. 133, 134.

abuse, than the extremer developments of the Mysticism summarised in the passage I have quoted, but not less opposed to Christian truth, and in special contradiction to the liberty wherewith Christ has made His people free. One secret of the strength and attraction of the mystical doctrines for him—that which drew him to them, even while he revolted against them—consisted, doubtless, in the fact that the element of truth which lay at the bottom of all their Antinomian paradoxes and inexplicable subtleties—that contained in the first paragraph of the preceding summary—was, if it could only have been disinvolved from the fallacies in which it was embedded, precisely the principle that was needed to correct his own servile doctrine of "means"—his ritualistic legalism. To this must be added, that the mystical doctrines, under the hands of some of their teachers, become a very cunning web of verbal deductions; a fabric of fallacies very deftly put together, and exceedingly likely to impose upon a verbal logician. Now, Wesley was a most dexterous master of the logical art and method. But if his mastery of the logician's craft often stood him in good stead when conducting an argument, it also was at times a snare to him. If he often easily and happily disentangled verbal subtleties, he was sometimes entangled in them. The school in which he was trained was a school of verbal dialectics and of scholastic distinctions. Hence, though he was furnished with the skill and possessed the power finally to penetrate and refute the fallacies of the mystics, he was for a time bewildered in their plausible mazes.

The passage I have quoted from his letter to his

brother, shows, at any rate, that Wesley had, from the beginning, the taste and tendencies of the philosophic theologian; and, moreover, that he had a fine philosophic capacity. The philosophic tincture and bias of thought remained with Wesley through life, and was shown in many of his sermons, not only in such of his most finished discourses, published in his ripe maturity of thought, as that on *The Original of the Law,* but in many of those which, in the later years of his long life, he wrote for the *Arminian Magazine.* His original tendency, in fact, was to be a philosophical rather than an evangelical, or even a biblical, theologian. His Moravian guides, especially Böhler, drove him to the New Testament. Böhler had strong reason when he said to him, "*Mi frater, mi frater, ista philosophia tua excoquenda est.*" It has often been said that Wesley was not a metaphysician; and there is truth in the saying, although it is by no means so absolutely true as it is commonly assumed to be. But then there can hardly be said to have been any metaphysical science in his earlier days, certainly not at Oxford. It might not be untruly said that even Cudworth was no metaphysician.[1] But if Wesley was not a metaphysician, he was a philosophical student in the whole bias of his intellect, addicted, no doubt, like all the students of his age, and in the spirit of all scholastic traditions, to synthesis and deduction rather than to analysis and induction; but nevertheless open to correction as respects this tendency The characteristic parts of Wesley's theology were based on experience and consciousness. His Arminianism was founded on the moral intuitions of humanity, in oppo-

[1] Cudworth was one of the Cambridge Platonists.

sition to the mere deductive logic of Calvinism. His doctrines of assurance and of Christian perfection, although moulded into a system by the help of his logical faculties—occasionally employed, as I venture to think, with more of verbal truth-seeming than of truth-reaching insight—yet reposed in their broad power and merits on the basis of living consciousness and experience. Whether as a logical expositor, however, or as a witness, and the mouthpiece of other witnesses, Wesley was never a dry, or a merely scholastic and systematic, theologian; there was always, in his teaching as a theologian, a living freshness of thought and a philosophic basis and mould of exposition. Even as a boy, he was singularly remarkable for reflectiveness;[1] and his Oxford discipline in early life—the influence, also, of Plato and Aristotle, of Taylor and Beveridge and Law—had contributed their full share to the permanent colour and quality of his intellectual character.[2]

Through all the preparatory stages of his life, Wesley was emphatically a learner. All through life, indeed, he was a man of a peculiarly open and teachable mind; as much so in his ninth as in his third decade. But during the first five-and-thirty years of his life he was not only a learner, he was a learner in quest of a teacher; he was looking out for a school in

[1] Clarke's *Wesley Family*, vol. ii. p. 321.

[2] A striking passage, relating to Wesley as a philosophic theologian, will be found in the *Remains* of the accomplished Alexander Knox, vol. iii. pp. 162–172. Knox was for twenty years an intimate friend of Wesley. He was afterwards an intimate friend of Southey. His *Remains* (4 vols.) and his *Correspondence with Bishop Jeff* (2 vols.) are well known. By some persons he has been absurdly supposed to be the first teacher of modern High Anglicanism.

which to study and graduate; he was unsettled in his principles. He went to school to the Rubric, and, being a loyal son of the Church of England, he worked long and assiduously in that school; but this, after all, was only grinding at the elements—"beggarly elements" he found them to be in after days; he went to school to Law, and for some years Law was his oracle, until he found that he durst not any longer follow the hazardous excursions of his teacher; he sat as a scholar at the feet of the Moravians during his voyage to Georgia, and also in the colony, although he could not accept all their teachings; he wrote from Georgia to his brother Samuel, entreating him for correction and instruction; in the colony he learned from Lutheran Salzburghers and from Scottish Presbyterians—not, indeed, as yet, lessons of true ecclesiastical liberality and catholicity, but much that sunk deep into his open and thoughtful mind. All through he felt that his system of theological and ecclesiastical principles remained yet to be formed; he had not found his centre or his basis; he was far from being at rest. Nevertheless, it is notable that, with all this, he felt that he was a teacher likewise, and he acted as such. If he was ever listening that he might learn, he was also ever speaking to instruct. His personal influence was always very great; there was authority in his presence and his words. Especially we must note that he was under the continual conviction that he was destined to be a chief teacher—the teacher not only of a company in his generation, but of multitudes in many generations. This conviction is expressed with startling distinctness in the letter to his elder brother which has been quoted. Begging his

brother to give him his thoughts respecting the principles of the mystics, as summarised in the letter, he says, with singular emphasis, "Give me them as particularly, fully, and strongly as your time will permit. They may be of consequence, not only to all this Province, but to nations of Christians yet unborn." So much did he think might depend on the settlement of his own views respecting Christian doctrine. The same sense of a most important destiny for himself as a teacher of men was expressed a year or two earlier, in his well-known reason for remaining at Oxford rather than succeed his father in the Epworth rectory. "The schools of the prophets," he said, "were at Oxford; and was it not a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain than to purify a particular stream?"[1]

[1] It is not necessary to the scope of the discussion in the text, to consider how far Wesley was justified in the view which he took of his duty respecting the matter referred to above. Not a few have thought that he ought to have yielded to the urgency of what were pleaded as the claims of family affection and duty, and have left Oxford for Epworth. Southey appears to have been of this mind. Mr. Tyerman, who gives a clear and full account of the whole question, evidently feels that Wesley ought to have yielded to his father's and his family's appeals. He speaks of this part of Wesley's history as "somewhat painfully mysterious;" and he thinks that he, in fact, clears it up by producing a letter to show that Wesley did, in the end, consent to seek, through his friend Broughton, at the hands of Mr. St. John, then in high office, a presentation to the crown living of Epworth. Miss Wedgwood, on the contrary, holds that Wesley "fully justifies" his insuperable reluctance to leave Oxford; and the Rev. J. Gordon, in his able and well-informed papers on Wesley in the *Theologian* (April and July, 1871), holds, in like manner, that Wesley was perfectly right in his feelings upon the matter. I think that, on such a point, Wesley alone could be the judge in his own case. It was a question of personal conscience and conviction. "He felt that he had a vocation to teach thinkers and teachers, to teach in the schools of

He seems to have had a settled and governing conviction that there was a great work to be done for the Church and the world, for the present and yet more for the future; a work which God had called him to do. He saw around him the need of such a work—a hollow and heartless world, full of corruption, vanity, and unrest, and a supine, undisciplined, insensible Church; and he felt stirring strongly within him the power and the call to awaken and organise the Church, and to impress and convert the world.

Such was John Wesley, the Oxford Methodist and the Georgian missionary. Such, on the whole, he appears to have remained up to the time of his quitting Georgia. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the intolerant High Church ritualist was all the time, and especially toward the end of his stay in Georgia, inwardly beginning to melt; the light of spiritual

the prophets;" that to him was duty. He knew what a country parish and parish duty were; he had served more than two years at Wroote; and he felt that a country cure was *not* his vocation. It seems probable, from the evidence which Mr. Tyerman has produced, that, at the last, Wesley did, against his own proper judgment and will, allow an application to be made on his behalf for presentation to Epworth in succession to his father. Miss Wedgwood, also, has, from other data, arrived at the same conclusion. "It appears, however," she says, "from an obscure sentence in a letter of Charles Wesley's, that John did at last make an unsuccessful and reluctant application for the living." I do not know to what letter she refers, and Mr. Tyerman, who knows almost everything about the Wesleys, makes no reference to any such sentence in any letter of Charles; but the coincidence between Mr. Tyerman's and Miss Wedgwood's conclusion is striking. Still this fact, if it be a fact, does not at all change the general aspect of the affair, and it remains true, notwithstanding, that Wesley, to use his own words, "continued in his purpose to live and die at Oxford, till Dr. Burton pressed him to go to Georgia." It may fairly be assumed that he neither expected nor desired the application, to which he reluctantly consented, to be successful.

liberty, even before he quitted Georgia, was beginning to break through the darkness which had so long wrapped him round, and to dawn into his soul; and during the spiritual solitude of his voyage home he must have learned much, and learned quickly. When he landed at Deal he was a very different man from what he had been two years and a half before, when he sailed for Georgia. This is shown by the reflections which at that time he wrote in his Journal. It is evident that his intercourse in the colony with Moravians, Salzburghers, and Presbyterians, in connection with his experience of his own errors and failures, and with the diligent and prayerful study of the Scriptures, had profited him more, upon recollection and reconsideration, during the voyage, than during the time he was in the colony, occupied in actively enforcing his own strongly held views, and in the routine of Church service and rubrical ceremonial.

CHAPTER II.

WESLEY'S EVANGELICAL CONVERSION.

THE following are the reflections to which I have referred, as written down by Wesley immediately after his return to England. They are so important, that, notwithstanding their length, I must give them entire, with the notes which Wesley appended to them in the later editions of his Journal:—

"It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity: but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I least of all suspected) that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God.[1] 'I am not mad,' though I thus speak; but 'I speak the words of truth and soberness;' if haply some of those who still dream may awake, and see that as I am so are they.

"Are they read in philosophy? So was I. In ancient or modern tongues? So was I also. Are they versed in the science of divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently upon spiritual things? The very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold, I gave all my goods

[1] "I am not sure of this."

to feed the poor. Do they give of their labour as well as of their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, ease, country; I have put my life in my hand, wandering into strange lands; I have given my body to be devoured by the deep, parched up with heat, consumed by toil and weariness, or whatsoever God should please to bring upon me. But does all this (be it more or less, it matters not) make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can know, say, give, do, or suffer, justify me in His sight? Yea, or the constant use of all the means of grace?—which, nevertheless, is meet, right, and our bounden duty Or that I know nothing of myself; that I am, as touching outward moral righteousness, blameless? Or, to come closer yet, the having a rational conviction of all the truths of Christianity? Does all this give me a claim to the holy, heavenly, Divine character of a Christian? By no means. If the oracles of God are true, if we are still to abide by 'the law and the testimony;' all these things, though, when ennobled by faith in Christ,[1] they are holy and just and good, yet without it are 'dung and dross,' meet only to be purged away by 'the fire that never shall be quenched.'

"This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I 'am fallen short of the glory of God;' that my whole heart is 'altogether corrupt and abominable,' and, consequently, my whole life, seeing it cannot be that an 'evil tree' should 'bring forth good fruit;' that, 'alienated' as I am from the life of God,

[1] "I believe not."

I am 'a child of wrath,'[1] an heir of hell; that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God—so far from making any atonement for the least of those sins, which 'are more in number than the hairs of my head'—that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide His righteous judgment; that, 'having the sentence of death' in my heart, and having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being 'justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus,—I have no hope, but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and 'be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. iii. 9).

"If it be said that I have faith (for many such things have I heard from many miserable comforters), I answer, So have the devils—a sort of faith; but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. So the apostles had even at Cana in Galilee, when Jesus first 'manifested forth His glory;' even then they, in a sort, 'believed on Him;' but they had not then 'the faith that overcometh the world.' The faith I want is,[2] 'A sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favour of God.' I want that faith which St. Paul recommends to all the world, especially in his Epistle to the Romans,—that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, 'I live not; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me,

[1] "I had even then the faith of a servant though not that of a son."
[2] "The faith of a *son*."

and gave Himself for me.' I want that faith which no one can have without knowing that he hath it (though many imagine they have it who have it not), for whosoever hath it is 'freed from sin,' the whole 'body of sin is destroyed' in him: he is 'freed from fear,' 'having peace with God through Christ, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' And he is freed from doubt, 'having the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him;' which 'Spirit itself beareth witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.'"

Here was evidently a spirit prepared of the Lord to receive the glad tidings of "salvation by faith," in the simplest and most evangelical form. Wesley was already on the very verge of the truth in its freedom and fulness. He was "convinced of sin;" was truly awakened and penitent, and was feeling after, was yearning for, the true "righteousness of Christ." It was natural that his humbled and chastened spirit, in the depth of its penitential awakening, should "write bitter things" against itself. In after years, writing in the fulness of his wide and mature Christian experience, Wesley revised the language which he had written in his sore trouble of spirit. To the passage which declares that he had never been "converted to God," he appended as a note the words, "I am not sure of this." Evidently the question here is as to the meaning of the word "converted." In one sense Wesley was truly and deeply "converted;" in another sense he was not yet "converted," not having as yet been made a partaker of the "righteousness of faith" in its full and true evangelical sense. He also, in his later revisions, corrected the record in his Journal at some

other points, by stating that "he had even then the faith of a servant, though not of a son," and that he was *not* at that time "a child of wrath," although he had not attained to that "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" which implies filial confidence, and cannot but bring with it filial love, the witness of the Spirit, and all the fruits which belong to the new birth. A controversy has been raised upon this question, into which I do not feel it needful to go. Mr. Wesley's *Notes on the New Testament*, especially if the notes are taken in connection with those sermons of his later life, in which he discriminates between the faith and experience of a "servant" of God and of a "son," are fully sufficient to explain in what sense Mr. Wesley may be truly said to have been, and in what sense not to have been, "converted" at the time of his return from Georgia in the first months of 1738. One thing all must be agreed upon, that Wesley was a man of very different spirit and experience in February, 1738, from what he had been four years before. He was then sincere and in earnest, but oscillating between an unevangelical mysticism and an equally unevangelical ritualistic legalism; he was "beating the air," and "going about to establish his own righteousness." Of the true doctrine of grace he seems to have had little perception or feeling, any more than of the true doctrine of faith—the one, indeed, must ever imply the other—for salvation is "of grace, through faith;" nor does he appear to have been the subject of a true "evangelical repentance." Now, on the contrary, Wesley was evidently a true and lowly penitent, whom the Spirit of God had emptied of his own self-righteousness, that he might be prepared for the

reception of Christ's righteousness—"the righteousness which is of God through faith."

In one thing, however, Wesley was not changed on his return. He still believed as firmly as ever in his "vocation." He landed at Deal at half-past four in the morning. That same morning, at a very early hour, before starting on his way to London, he read and expounded at the inn, and he did the like after arriving at Faversham in the evening. His humbling experience in Georgia had not in the least disheartened him, or abated his courage in this respect. Since he left England he had seemed to fail in everything; his influence as a clergyman had declined almost to nothing in Georgia; he had become embroiled in law, partly, at least, through his own unwisdom, if partly through his fidelity; his reputation as a man of counsel and of action could not but have suffered; many slanders respecting him were afloat; his heart, for which it seemed as if no haven of conjugal affection was to be found, had been cruelly wounded. Such was the issue of a voyage and mission, which he had undertaken in the fond hope that in a new world he might, in God's hands, be and do something better and something more in his own time and for generations to come, than he had ever been, had ever done, or could have hoped to be or do, even in Oxford, where were "the schools of the prophets," if he had spent his best days there.

It could not but frequently recur to Wesley, in his meditations on the history of the two hapless-seeming years he had spent in America, that there must somewhere be a vital defect, a fatal flaw either in his character or in his doctrine or in his methods. His

enterprise as a missionary pioneer had broken down in a most humiliating way.

It is true, indeed—as Mr. Tyerman happily quotes Whitefield's "Journal," written but a few months later, to show—that, after all, Wesley had left not a little good behind him in Georgia; that among the best people of the colony "his name" was "very precious;" and that he had laid a valuable foundation for Whitefield to build upon. But to Wesley's mind, on his voyage home, his failures would be present, while the measure of his success would be as yet unknown. Nor, after all, was that measure of success, which we cannot but place in contrast with the results accomplished in Georgia by Whitefield's ministry, sufficient to do more than qualify. to a limited extent, the picture of failure, on the whole, which has passed under our view.

His Journal reveals to us, in part, the working of his mind during the voyage. He exerted himself to the utmost for the good of the seamen; but this could only yield him partial and temporary relief. During the former part of the voyage he was "continually weighed down with fearfulness and heaviness." He writes, in the fulness of his heart, among many other words of lamentation, that he had thus far "evidently built without a foundation." During the last fortnight he had some comfort; but yet he writes, five days before the voyage came to an end, "I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near; but let death look

me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'To die is gain!'

> "'I have a sin of fear, that when I've spun
> My last thread, I shall perish on the shore!'"

Such was the working of Wesley's mind during his voyage home from Georgia—a period which we may look upon as for him a critical season of searching, gracious, humbling experience; a seed-time overcast with heavy clouds, but rich in promise; a seed-time of weeping, which was to be followed by a life-long harvest of spiritual fruitfulness.

Wesley, during the voyage, deliberately reviewed his whole experience, and the phases of thought and feeling through which he had been passing during the twelve years preceding. Of this review I have already availed myself, especially in the Second Part of this volume, in delineating the formation of his opinions and the growth of his character. We have seen how near, before he landed at Deal, Wesley had come to the simplicity and truth of Gospel teaching. This "scribe" certainly was "not far from the kingdom of God." The Providence which had brought him thus far on his way—which had brought "the blind by a way that he knew not, even by paths which he had not known"—had in readiness for him at this very point the human guide who was to lead him into the fulness of evangelical faith and experience. "Darkness" was now to be made "light before him," and "crooked things straight." What Philip was to the Ethiopian eunuch, what Peter was to Cornelius, Böhler was to become to Wesley.

At the very moment when Wesley landed at Deal,

his teacher was on his way to England from Germany. He was a Moravian minister; and he came to England that he might go forward to the very colonies which Wesley had just left. Within a week after Wesley's landing at Deal, he and Böhler met in London. Böhler, in a letter to Zinzendorf, gives a description of Wesley as he found him. He describes him as "a good-natured man,"[1] who "knew he did not properly believe on the Saviour, and was willing to be taught." He adds, "Our mode of believing in the Saviour is so easy to Englishmen, that they cannot reconcile themselves to it; if it were a little more artful [artificial?], they would much sooner find their way into it. They justify themselves; and therefore they always take it for granted that they believe already, and try to prove their faith by their works, and thus so plague and torment themselves that they are at heart very miserable."[2]

Wesley always regarded his intercourse with Böhler as the cardinal point in his spiritual history. Having landed at Deal on February 1st, he fell in, six days later (February 7th), in London, with Böhler, just landed from Germany, and procured him lodgings. He sets a special note against this day in his Journal, as "a day much to be remembered;" and he mentions that, from this time, he did not willingly lose any opportunity, during his stay in London, of conversing with Böhler and his companions. He accompanied his Moravian teacher to Oxford on the 17th, and took him with him to visit Mr. Gambold (who had been

[1] The English translation here is, no doubt, inadequate. The meaning probably is—a man of excellent disposition and principles.

[2] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. i. pp. 181, 182.

led astray by "mystic delusion"), at Stanton-Harcourt, on the 18th. It was during this visit to Oxford that Böhler insisted so solemnly to Wesley that "his philosophy" needed to "be purged away." On the 4th of March, returning to Oxford to visit his brother Charles, who had been ill of pleurisy there, he found Böhler with his brother, and writes that by him on the next day (Sunday) he was "clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."[1] Meantime Böhler exhorted him to preach the true faith and way of faith, though he might not himself as yet have attained thereto. His intercourse with his Moravian guide at Oxford lasted till the 10th, when Böhler returned to London. On the 23rd, being in Oxford, he met Böhler there again. I give the whole of the entry in his Journal under this date. "I met Peter Böhler again, who now amazed me more and more by the account he gave of the fruits of living faith—the holiness and happiness which he affirmed to attend it. The next morning I began the Greek Testament again, resolving to abide by 'the law and the testimony,' and being confident that God would hereby show me whether this doctrine was of God."

Already the "new wine" of the kingdom was working mightily within his breast. He had been the slave of forms; he had been greatly surprised, if not shocked, when he heard the Presbyterian minister in the American colony offer an extemporary prayer. But now we find him writing, under date of April 1st, "Being at Mr. Fox's society, my heart was so full that I could not confine myself to the forms of

[1] "With the full Christian salvation," is Wesley's note at this place in the revised edition of his early Journals.

prayer which we were accustomed to use there. Neither do I purpose to be confined to them any more, but to pray indifferently, with a form or without, as I may find suitable to particular occasions." The new wine was threatening to burst the "old bottles;" presently "new bottles" were to be provided, so that the wine should not be lost. Meantime, in the record last quoted, we recognise the main principle of Wesley's ecclesiastical course. His singularity, and independence of decision and action, had nothing factious about them; they resulted from the simple, disinterested, paramount principle of using whatever means or methods of action clearly promised to do the most good. He enters into no abstract controversy as to praying with or without forms; probably his experiences among the Moravians, yet more than his intercourse with the Presbyterian minister and congregation, had served to emancipate him from the bondage of custom and servile ecclesiasticism as to this particular, while an acute Oxford Churchman was not likely to adopt a sweeping condemnation of forms of prayer, which would not only have prohibited the use of the Liturgy of his own Church, ever by him so deeply loved, but even of the Lord's prayer. But he finds free prayer, under certain conditions of feeling, to be more congenial, more adequate, and more affecting, than any form could be; therefore he determines henceforth to hold himself at liberty, according to the occasion, to pray with or without forms. As to any reproach of singularity or enthusiasm, while he by no means courted such reproach, the time had long gone by when it could have any terror for him. Here, then, we have a

typical instance, thus early in his course, of the spirit and principles which governed Wesley's proceedings through life. The ritualist was already greatly changed; a new inspiration was welling up within him. His bonds had been for some time melting away; there was soon to be an end of them. Already the manacles had dissolved from the hands of devotion; soon the fetters would be broken which had bound his feet from running in the evangelical way. Already he had been impelled to use the blessed privilege of free utterance in prayer, and to avail himself of the large liberty to pray with "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;" the day was very near, when, by his preaching also, the Word of the Lord was to "have free course and be glorified."

On the 22nd of April, Wesley met Böhler again in London. As to the nature of faith, the Moravian had prevailed, and also as to the fruits of faith; but Wesley still doubted whether there was scriptural authority for the penitent, prayerful, waiting soul to expect to receive the power and gift of faith immediately through the operation of the Holy Ghost; whether it could really be imparted in a moment. Here, again, he records in his Journal that he was silenced by an appeal to the Scripture, where, to his "utter astonishment," he "found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous conversions, scarce any so slow as that of St. Paul, who was three days in the pangs of the new birth." Wesley, however, was not by any means easily beaten out of his English and Church of England[1] habits of thought in respect to the faith of a

[1] Church of England, as that Church actually was and had long been, but not as the Homilies teach.

Christian. He urged that, whatever might have been the case in apostolic times, there was no proof that God worked in the same manner now. From this last hold of doubt and incredulity he was dislodged the next day (Sunday, 23rd) by the evidence of "several living witnesses." "Here," he says, "ended my disputing. I could now only cry out, 'Lord, help Thou mine unbelief.'"

It is evident that up to this time, far as he had been brought on his way toward the great Gospel truth, Wesley had yet never been able to free himself from the feeling that Christian faith was largely an intellectual exercise; and that, where it ceased to be intellectual, it became a humanly moral act; that it was "of the operation," not "of God" (Col. ii. 12), but of a man's own understanding and responsible moral inclination or will. The great truth that the power descends from God—that it must be waited and looked for in the way of prayer and penitent seeking and service—that it is a spiritual, supernatural act and habit of soul, at once the fruit and seed of a Divine life-stirring, uniting in itself the characters of penitent humility, of self-renunciation, of simple trust, of absolute obedience, both of understanding and will, indissolubly joined with loving rapture and self-consecration—that it is, to use Wesley's own words, "the loving, obedient sight of a present and reconciled God"—this was a truth which Wesley had not conceived of, and found it very hard to accept. So true is it, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Wesley, indeed, was not, at the time when he first met

Böhler, a merely "natural man," any more than the disciples were before our Lord's resurrection. But he was not yet, in the full and proper sense, "a spiritual man." He was a servant of God; but still he was "carnal." He was not yet fully born into the kingdom of heaven, with its spiritual light and blessedness, although he was "brought to the birth," and was very near the hour of his enlargement into the "glorious liberty of the children of God."

Wesley, in his own epitome of what passed between Böhler and himself, thus sums up the final result, so far as it respected the change which had been wrought in his doctrinal views: "I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it (that is, faith) unto the end: 1. By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness, *on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.* 2. By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing—justifying, saving faith; a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption."[1]

Wesley continued to consort with Böhler. It was on the 23rd of April (Sunday) that he was finally convinced. He was in continual intercourse with his teacher for several days following, until the 26th, when Böhler accompanied him some miles on his way out of town. His brother's illness brought him back to London on the 1st of May, where he found his friend and guide again. On the 4th Böhler left

[1] Wesley's *Works*, vol. i. p. 102.

London to sail to Carolina. Wesley's note in his Journal on Böhler's departure corresponds with the emphatic "Memorandum" inscribed over the date of their first meeting, and reveals also how deep and strong in Wesley's soul was that conviction of his own momentous work and vocation to which I have referred: "O what a work hath God begun since his coming into England! such a one as shall never come to an end till heaven and earth shall pass away!"

Meantime Wesley had not yet obtained the treasure he had sought for so long and so diligently, though for a long time in wrong directions. He had not himself, as yet, been able to "believe unto salvation." His brother Charles had not yielded to Böhler's arguments until a fortnight after himself, and indeed had for a short time angrily opposed John on this point; nevertheless, partly, as it would seem, through the ministry of sickness, he was made a partaker of "joy and peace through believing" earlier than John. While John was entering this Bethesda, Charles stepped in before him. This was on Sunday, the 21st of May. It was not until Wednesday, the 24th, that John Wesley, according to the beautiful and familiar account which we have in his own words, "felt his heart strangely warmed, felt that he did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation," and had "an assurance given him that Christ had taken away his sin, and saved him from the law of sin and death." This day, May the 24th, 1738, is a great landmark in the history of the Wesleyan movement.

Until Wesley learned the doctrine of "salvation by grace, through faith, not of ourselves," but as the "gift of God," he had been a ritualist; and it had been his

doctrine that salvation was secured by moral and ritual conformity to what the Church requires. From this time forth he taught that salvation was not by works or rites, but by that faith of the new creation, that faith in "Christ and Him crucified," which unites the soul with Christ through His Spirit, which introduces the soul into "newness of life," so that the believer is made a child and heir of God and a "joint heir with Christ." Faith he was to teach hereafter as the principle and inlet of the Divine and Christian life in the human soul. But this change entirely revolutionised the character and tenor of his ministry. To constrain, by the authority of Christ and His Church—by virtue, very mainly, of Church discipline and law—men and women to obey the requirements of the Church, had been his vocation heretofore; he had been an ecclesiastical magistrate, a disciplinary officer, a moral and ritual watchman, in the service of the Church; his work had been to carry out discipline and instruction in detail. But now he was to be something very different. It was to be his business to preach salvation through Christ Jesus to all men. His first and chief work now was to point the way to Him. The rest would follow for those who repaired to Him. He was not to be a priest, observing, enforcing, carrying out a ritual; but, like the Baptist, whose priestly office was merged in his great prophetic function, he was to be a herald and a witness whose one vocation was to direct sinners away from himself, from the Church, from all else whatsoever, to Christ, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Faith henceforth was to be his doctrine; he was to teach that men are saved by faith. But

"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." From this hour, accordingly, this ritualistic priest and ecclesiastical martinet was to be transformed into a flaming preacher of the great evangelical salvation and life, in all its branches and its rich and varied experiences. Hence arose Wesleyan Methodism and all the Methodist Churches.

In his famous correspondence with Law, which took place during the period of his intercourse with Böhler, but before he had attained to peace through believing, Wesley has expressed very distinctly what he at the time regarded as being the essential defect of his faith up to the period of his receiving Böhler's instructions. His faith up to this time he describes as a "speculative notional shadow, which lives in the head, not in the heart." He has also described very pointedly the sort of doctrine which, in contrast to his own conceptions heretofore, Böhler had insisted upon. "This faith, indeed," that "holy man" had told him, "is the free gift of God. But seek, and thou shalt find. Strip thyself naked of thine own works, and fly to Him. 'For whosoever cometh to Him, He will in no wise cast out.'" And his complaint against his former instructor is: "Why did I scarce ever hear you name the name of Christ? Never, so as to ground anything upon faith in His blood." [1]

[1] Miss Wedgwood's observations on this correspondence are acute, and contain a measure of truth, although here as elsewhere she has misconceived Wesley's character as regards the point of insight and sympathy with particular minds. Wesley wrote as he did to Law because he believed himself to be bound both to God and man, and especially to Mr Law, to do his utmost to point out to him, in full light, what he regarded as his most mischievous doctrinal defect and error. Wesley's manner of doing this was a remnant of his old hier-

Miss Wedgwood has firmly grasped the significance of Wesley's experience at this critical period of his history She reads aright the meaning, at least in general, of his experience during the voyage home, and she sees very distinctly the nature of the revolution in his views and aims which was effected by his conversion. "Wesley's homeward voyage in 1738," she says, "marks the conclusion of his High Church period. He abated nothing of his attachment to the ordinances of the Church either then or to the last days of his life, and he did not so soon reach that degree of independence of her hierarchy and some of her rules which marks his furthest point of divergence; but his Journals during this voyage chronicle for us that deep dissatisfaction which is felt whenever an earnest nature wakes up to the incompleteness of a traditional religion; and his after life, compared with his two years in Georgia, makes it evident that he passed at this time into a new spiritual region. His

archical character and temper; a derivative from the views which he had held so long, and the influences under which his character for so many years had been moulded. It was not to be expected that the conscientious dogmatism which such opinions as he had held cannot fail always to produce, should all at once pass away, even when he had begun to look away from his Church to his Saviour. If Wesley had not embraced the doctrines of grace, and salvation by faith, he must have retained, as his official temper, such arrogant austerity as he had already shown in Georgia, notwithstanding the brightness and candour of his natural disposition. Mr. Tyerman as usual, takes the severest view of Wesley's share in this correspondence. Not content with condemning Wesley as petulant and harsh, he speaks of his letter to Law as an "intolerable outrage." Canon Overton, on the contrary, although himself the admiring biographer of Law, "utterly disagrees" with any such opinion, and vindicates Wesley's temper and purpose in what he wrote to his old teacher. —Overton's *William Law*, pp. 82–87.

Journals are marked by a depression which we never meet with again."[1] Having referred, a few pages further on, to the religious societies of which Dr. Woodward has left us an account, and which had preceded Methodism, Miss Wedgwood makes the following discriminating and acute observations:—"The religious societies of the seventeenth century were in organisation a feebler and more liberal Methodism.[2] It was, however, only in organisation that the two things were alike. The spirit of the older societies was not only unlike Methodism, but it was the very spirit from which Methodism was a reaction. They were distinctively *Church* bodies, and they belonged characteristically to the Church at that time; they embodied the principles of that party whose watchwords were virtue and vice, and who were not afraid to speak of the support of a good conscience, and of the everlasting rewards which 'were worthy of all the care and toil which were to be spent in the pursuit of them' (*Dr. Woodward*). The reader will at once appreciate the chasm which phrases like these indicate between the speakers and the school of Wesley. Adherence to the Church was no longer the *first* condition of membership in any society with which he was in sympathy. *The birthday of a Christian was already shifted from his baptism to his conversion, and in that change the partition line of two great systems is crossed.*"[3]

[1] *John Wesley*, p. 140.

[2] By "more liberal" Miss Wedgwood means "less strict." But the observations which follow show that being *Church* societies, these less strict societies were ecclesiastically more exclusive, and therefore less "liberal."

[3] *John Wesley*, p. 157.

The last sentence quoted admirably expresses the master-truth which explains the whole sequel of Wesley's life—which furnishes the key to the whole development of Wesleyan Methodism. Mr. Tyerman has given a full and excellent account of Wesley's religious experience during the whole of this critical period in his history; with the minuteness characteristic of a student and preacher of evangelical theology, he has exhibited on the surface of his pages those instructive fluctuations in Wesley's own views and experience, during the early months after his conversion, which Wesley himself sets forth fully in his Journals, and which show that Wesley's views respecting the nature of the Spirit's witness, and the character and extent of regeneration, were, as was to be expected, not fully defined or finally settled until some time after his conversion; and in particular, as Mr. Tyerman intimates, that they had been not a little disturbed and perplexed by what he had heard among the Moravians during his visit to them in Germany, almost immediately after he had "found peace." But Mr. Tyerman fails to show the critical nature of the change which Wesley underwent through the teaching and instrumentality of Böhler. It is possible to maintain that, in a certain and a true sense of the word, Wesley had been "converted" — that is, thoroughly and graciously awakened into sincere repentance—before he knew Böhler; but, nevertheless, what marked and made the absolute revolution in his mind and character, with all his prospects and motives, was his full acceptance of that doctrine of evangelical faith which the Moravian was the means of making known to his spiritual apprehension, and his

embrace of the Saviour by that faith, as his own Saviour in ever-present virtue and plenitude. By making the most of Wesley's antecedent preparation of heart, and by laying too much stress on those fluctuations of spirit and of view, and those self-depreciatory statements respecting his own experience soon after his conversion, the like of which are so commonly found in the experience of humble and conscientious young converts, who, as yet, are necessarily wanting in experience of spiritual difficulties, perplexities, and temptations, and whose natural but unwarranted expectations of settled joy and tranquillity have been painfully disappointed, it is possible to diminish the proportions and to obscure the relations of the great cardinal change in Wesley's spiritual character on which we have been dwelling. Miss Wedgwood, however, clearly sees the importance and the critical nature of that change, and has admirably stated it in the passage we have quoted. Wesley had embraced the cardinal doctrine of "salvation by faith." Now, to quote again the classical text which was quoted a short while ago, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In other words, the preaching of the truth of God, and not the administration of the sacraments as such, becomes to the evangelical believer the great means of spreading salvation—of conveying life to those who are in a state of spiritual death. Christians are to be "sanctified" by "the truth," even by the "word of God;" to be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." It is not the sacraments, as rites duly administered, which, of themselves, become spirit and life to the recipient,

but it is the truth in the sacraments spiritually apprehended and embraced, which fills them with blessing to the believer. The "expulsive power," accordingly, of the new principle which Wesley had embraced, could not but before long cast out the sacramental Ritualism which had held him in bondage. He did not, of course, cast all his grave-clothes off at once; but rapidly, though gradually, he did cast them away. Meantime he preached his new doctrine with new and startling power; and so entered upon that grand course of preaching which was to lay the foundation for all his organisation—for his whole fellowship and "Connexion." Wesley the Ritualist was transformed into Wesley the Preacher. Wesleyan Methodism is derived, not from Wesley the Ritualist, but from Wesley the Preacher.

Let me here be permitted to quote some sentences which have already been published. "With Wesley's Ritualism his High Churchmanship could not but also wither away. A number of old and long customary prejudices and predilections—habits of thought and feeling which had become a second nature—still clave to him for awhile; but these dropped off one by one, until scarcely a vestige of them was left. All the irregularities of the Methodist leader,—his renunciation of Church bigotry and exclusiveness; his partial, but progressive and fundamental, separation from the Church which imposed shackles on his evangelical activities, and frowned upon his converts, and the ultimate separation, in due sequence, of the Church he had founded from the Church in which he was nurtured,—all these results were involved in this change. Newman renounced justification by faith,

and clung to apostolic succession, therefore he went to Rome; Wesley embraced justification by faith, and renounced apostolic succession, therefore his people are a separate people from the Church of England." [1]

[1] See *London Quarterly Review* (July, 1868, pp. 293–4).

CHAPTER III.

WESLEY THE PREACHER.

WESLEY'S special character, and the secret of his extraordinary power as a preacher, have not been generally understood, even by writers of his own communion. If Southey went astray when he sought to explain the mystery by reference merely to human qualities and accidents, to place, time, and circumstance, superadded to personal endowments of mind and manner and bodily appearance, it would be equally an error, although in an opposite direction, if we were merely to resolve the whole of his characteristic power, in all its varieties of play and application, into the special influence of the Spirit of God. For other men, no less devoted in spirit, and equally orthodox in doctrine, have preached to men, high or low, of the like condition and character with those whom Wesley addressed, but no one else has ever produced habitually, and as a rule, such effects as ordinarily attended John Wesley's earlier ministry, and often attended his ministry in middle and later life. There was a specific quality about his preaching, and there was a specific character belonging to the effects which his preaching produced—the question is to discover and define the specific quality of his preaching,

which stands in relation with the specific effects produced.

His was not the character of mind, nor had his been the training and experience, which might have been expected to make a popular religious orator, or an awakening preacher of electrical and overwhelming power over all classes, but especially over the working masses of the people. For nearly twenty years he had led the life of a student. He was an accomplished scholar, a logician without a rival among his coevals at the University, a man of nice and sensitive taste. He belonged to an unbroken ancestral succession of English gentlemen, of whom at least his three immediate predecessors were scholars and divines. On the mother's side, as well as on the father's, the like would seem to have been true. No fibre of hereditary connection between himself and the artisan classes, or the peasantry of England, can be traced in all his long pedigree; and yet this was the man whose words were to take hold of colliers and weavers, of tinners and stone-masons, and hard-handed workers generally, as no man's words had done before for centuries, if ever, or have done since. He was as true and thorough an English gentleman as Wycliffe, the hero and reformer of his own University, whose breeding and lineage seem to be reflected in the kingliness of his features and his person; but, unlike Wycliffe, who was a doctor among scholars, and a preacher and witness before nobles and statesmen, but not—perhaps for want of opportunity—a preacher to the people, Wesley was as much a preacher to the multitude, whether of town or country, as Hugh Latimer himself, the man of yeoman birth, although, herein unlike Latimer, he never, in his

plain words to the plainest, the poorest, the least instructed, employed any other language than would have been suitable for a gentleman to use in addressing educated men. His temperament and his religious course and training were not, any more than his intellectual tastes and college life, such as might have been expected to fit him for the work of pioneer preaching, of what would now be called mission-preaching, among the masses. He was remarkable for the calmness of his temperament. He had been addicted to no course or habit of excitement. From his youth he had led a regular religious life. He loved Church forms and usages, not only before his "conversion" in 1738, but all his life afterwards. He retained the tastes of a cultivated High Churchman all his life, even although he had in early middle life renounced High Church superstitions, whether theological or ecclesiastical. His most congenial element to the last would have been found rather in the cathedral solemnity than in the zest of open-air addresses to an uninstructed multitude. And yet this man became the greatest open-air preacher England has ever seen, while for taming a mob, or overawing desperadoes, by serene steadfastness, and calm remonstrance and persuasion, history has never known his equal.

Doubtless Wesley, as a speaker, had many and great natural advantages. His person, although of small stature, was symmetrical, elegant, and manly His carriage and address were frank and graceful. His features were handsome and expressive, combining dignity and sweetness, sensibility and firmness, and not without a certain air of mild and unconscious authority. The pure transparency of his fair complexion and the

vivid power of his eye—his eye was of many moods, and must, I think, have been of a bright hazel colour —added to the charm and impressiveness of his personal aspect. Even before he had attained to the life and peace of evangelical faith, we are told of him by his college friend Gambold, that he had "often seen him come out of his closet with a serenity that was next to shining." The same witness describes him as a man of the "most transparent sincerity," at the same time that he also describes him as having "something of authority in his countenance," though "he never assumed any to himself above his companions." Dr. Kennicott, the famous Hebrew critic, heard Wesley preach his last sermon before the University of Oxford, his subject being "Scriptural Christianity,"—a sermon of remarkable fidelity and force, a lucid and engaging exposition of evangelical doctrine, followed by a most close and searching application, at once severe —yet with a mitigated severity—and pathetic, with a spiritual yearning and earnestness that are all the more powerful for the dignity and self-restraint of the preacher. This was in the year 1744, six years after Wesley's conversion, and when he was in his very prime, being little more than forty years of age. "His black hair," says Dr. Kennicott, by no means a too partial witness, "quite smooth, and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man." He speaks of his "agreeable emphasis" in reading. He refers with approval to "many just invectives" in his sermon, but with disapproval to the "zeal and unbounded satire with which he fired his address when he came to what he called his plain, practical con-

clusion." If "his censures" had only been "moderated, and certain portions omitted," Kennicott says, "I think his discourse, as to style and delivery, would have been uncommonly pleasing to others as well as myself." He adds, "He is allowed to be a man of great parts."

Such a man was naturally qualified to be an able and interesting expositor, or a powerful advocate, or, with adequate inspiration and afflatus, a great preacher to the conscience. Beforehand, however, it would hardly have been anticipated that he would become a mighty field-preacher, a wielder of vast multitudes, who moved under his word as the trees of the forest under a great wind. Unlike Whitefield, he had no pictorial power or dramatic inspiration, nor had he, like the same great preacher, a special power of effusive pathos. Though tenderness and controlled, suggestive pathos were eminently his, he had not the near and ready "gift of tears" which belonged to Whitefield, and also to Charles Wesley, who seems, in some respects, when at his best, to have occupied, as a preacher, a position intermediate between his brother and Whitefield. He excelled in statement and exposition, in argument which had the closest coherency and force of logic without any of its forms, without a trace of pedantry or of the manner of the schools, in analysis of reaons and motives, in home-thrusts of application, in plain and earnest appeal; as a speaker he was, in brief, lucid, engaging, expressive, impressive. But his use of rhetoric was sparing, of fancy or imagination there is scarcely a trace in all his writings; while what would today be described as sensational preaching would have been abhorrent to his taste. The power by which he gripped and held and overwhelmed the souls of

his hearers was partly logical, partly spiritual. Its inspiration was merely faith and love—the Christian faith, the Christian love. He could not have been a descriptive lecturer or a dramatic orator. His intellectual gifts, apart from his spiritual inspiration and fervour, would not have made him, either in the last century or at the present day, a speaker to fascinate a popular audience, or to command and enthrall a mob. Whitefield's pictorial and dramatic power drew vast and delighted crowds, not only of the lower, but of the upper classes, who resorted to him again and again, apart from all spiritual sensibility on their part, because, like the prophet, he was a pleasant player on an unrivalled instrument of popular eloquence. Multitudes resorted to Wesley—even greater multitudes than crowded round Whitefield—because he "reasoned of sin and righteousness and judgment;" some for the sake of opposition, hating the preacher and his doctrine; some because of the mere fame of his spiritual power, and of the wonderful effects produced; some because, though they feared the preacher and his doctrine, they were yet so far amenable to spiritual influence, had so much of spiritual sensibility, that they felt mysteriously drawn and fascinated by the prophet-like force and gifts of the man; some because they were deeply awakened, or at least beginning to feel after God, and recognised in Wesley a man of spiritual faculty and insight to deal with cases such as theirs. Whatever their motives, those who came were obliged to feel that they were in the presence of one who totally forgot himself in his theme. His presentation of the truth was so direct, that they were brought face to face, not with

him, but with his Divine Master and the Divine authority; and he was so inspired with the spirit of Divine love, as well as the sense of the Divine holiness, that the awakened hearers thought not of him, but rather of Christ the Saviour as reasoning with them and entreating them to be reconciled unto God. Doubtless here we touch the real secret of that overwhelming power which so commonly attended Wesley's preaching, which made the huge gatherings of people that surrounded him sometimes assume the appearance of a routed army, with men and women on all sides round, first stricken to the earth, and then crying for mercy.

His was pre-eminently a convincing and awakening ministry. His appeal was not to the fancy or the imagination, still less did he enforce his applications by reference to material terrors or painted horrors—although he never attempted to conceal or suppress God's revelation of wrath against all unrighteousness—nor was his appeal to sentimental sensibilities or to considerations of what may be described as moral taste; although his beautiful and noble sermon on the "Original of the Law" shows that, on fitting occasion, he could speak as a Christian Plato might have spoken in regard to the beauty of holiness;—his appeal was chiefly and essentially to the conscience. But all was done with a manly tenderness which disarmed prejudice and pride, and broke down stubborn opposition. "The love of Christ constraineth us" was his experience and his inspiration.

The story of brave John Nelson, of whose noble character and excellent plain sense Southey in his *Life of Wesley* cannot speak too highly, may serve

to illustrate what I have now been trying to express. "In the spring," says Nelson, "Mr. Whitefield came into Moorfields, and I went to hear him. He was to me as a man who could play well on an instrument, for his preaching was pleasant to me, and I loved the man; so that if any one offered to disturb him, I was ready to fight for him. But I did not understand him, though I might hear him twenty times for aught I know," *i.e.*, he may have heard him twenty times. Shortly afterwards he writes as follows: "In all this time I did not open my mind to any person, either by word or letter; but I was like a wandering bird cast out of the nest, till Mr. John Wesley came to preach his first sermon in Moorfields." [This was in 1739.] "O, that was a blessed morning to my soul! As soon as he got upon the stand, he stroked back his hair and turned his face towards where I stood, and, I thought, fixed his eyes upon me. His countenance fixed such an awful dread upon me, before I heard him speak, that it made my heart beat like the pendulum of a clock; and when he did speak, I thought his whole discourse was aimed at me. When he had done, I said, 'This man can tell the secrets of my heart; he hath not left me there; for he hath showed the remedy, even the blood of Jesus.' Then was my soul filled with consolation, through hope that God for Christ's sake would save me." The work, however, in Nelson's soul was not yet accomplished. Faith was not yet full-born in him, and he fell back into doubt, almost into despair, and into outward sin. He heard Wesley a second time, many weeks having intervened, and thus describes the second sermon: "When he began to speak, his words made me tremble.

I thought he spoke to no one but me, and I durst not look up; for I imagined all the people were looking at me. But before Mr. Wesley concluded his sermon he cried out, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.' I said, 'If that be true, I will turn to God to-day.'" From this time the reformed penitent continued, as far as possible, to attend Wesley's preaching. A little afterwards, we read in his Journal that on a certain "evening after preaching, under Mr. Wesley's sermon, he could do nothing but weep, and love, and praise God for sending His servant into the fields to show him the way of salvation."

Further illustration of the nature and source of Wesley's power is afforded by some passages in his Journal, relating to a period somewhat later than the date of Nelson's conversion. In 1742, Wesley for the first time visited Newcastle-on-Tyne. He walked into the town, and never, as he tells us, had witnessed so much drunkenness, cursing and swearing, from the mouths of little children as well as of adults, in so short time. Most characteristically—with a touching and beautiful tenderness — upon this he exclaims, "Surely this place is ripe for Him who 'came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'" On the Sunday morning he went, with a single friend, being altogether unknown to the townspeople, and, taking his stand in the very centre of the worst quarter of the town, began to preach. His congregation grew till more than 1200 people stood around him. "As usual," says Dr. Abel Stevens, "when he addressed the vicious

poor, he discoursed on one of the most consolatory texts, 'He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.'" When he had done, the poor people stood "gaping and staring" upon him with astonishment. He told them his name, and announced that he would preach there again in the evening. He did preach to an immense crowd—a vaster crowd, he tells us, than he had ever seen at Moorfields or Kennington Common; and so began the wonderful work of Methodism among the colliers of Newcastle and round about, a work which was to spread from that centre into all the dales of Northumberland, Durham, and North Yorkshire, transforming the mining and yeomanry population with a power similar to that which, at the other extremity of the kingdom, was seen in the reformation of Cornwall, which remains to this day so widely and so rootedly Methodist.

To be savingly converted is to receive and "obey the truth through the Spirit." Accordingly, where the Divine and saving truth is most clearly, purely, and simply preached in its gospel directness and fulness, with the least of human colouring or admixture, there the power of the Spirit of God may be expected to produce the most direct and decisive effects. Wesley's preaching conspicuously answered to these conditions. There was nothing in his preaching that looked like human art or device; the language was simpler and more transparent than that of other speakers; and so "the truth" shone more clearly and fully through. There was less of what "man's wisdom teacheth," less of what was fanciful, or elaborate, or

artificial; there was more, therefore, of the Spirit's operation, more of "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Hence the "excelleney of the power" in Wesley's preaching, a power which was felt to be "not of man, but of God."

Such power, indeed, can only attend the preaching of gospel truth in its sublime simplicity and purity. It cannot be associated with mere Ritualism; it cannot exist in the atmosphere of Pharisaism. The soul acknowledges and feels the grandeur and tenderness of the doctrine of "Christ crucified;" preaching which knows not this Gospel doctrine is powerless for the renewal of the soul in righteousness. When our Saviour would awaken the spiritual consciousness of the Pharisee "master in Israel," he spoke to him of God's love to the world in the gift of His only-begotten Son for the world's salvation; when Paul preached to the Corinthians, the ever-present and inspiring motive which gave soul to his ministry was that the "love of Christ constrained him." The one unchanging staple of his doctrine was "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to the saved, whether Jews or Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." But neither his Oxford Ritualism, nor even his best and highest thoughts as a High Church moralist, could furnish Wesley with any such ideas or motives as these, wherewith to bring home spiritual truth and the vision of God in Christ to the souls of his hearers. Here, then, was the grand inspiration of Wesley the evangelist. He had learnt, by his own experience, that the Gospel doctrine received into the soul by a living faith made the believer a "new creature in Christ Jesus;" and he

had felt, accordingly, that to preach this forgotten doctrine, to bring forth into the view of the Church and the world this long obscured and neglected "mystery of Christ," must henceforth be the business of his life. But still further, when he began to preach this Gospel truth, he felt, and all that heard him felt, that a new life and power had been infused into his preaching. Now, for the first time, the whole man was kindled and inspired by a Divine conviction and force. All his faculties and affections, of body, soul, and spirit, were united and harmonised in their highest intensity and their most complete development, and found expression—concentrated expression—in his preaching. Before this period he had been an excellent preacher within his range, and on certain topics. But his range was limited. In regard to the highest sphere of spiritual realities—the realities of spiritual experience—he had no vision, no force: he was "weak as other men." But the "Spirit of the Lord was upon him" now, and he preached as one inspired especially when dark and benighted thousands stood around him, looking with blank wonder and vague expectation on his rapt and solemn countenance.

Such a preacher, under such circumstances, could not be a sermon-reader or the reciter of a discourse. Full of his subject, and possessing, from natural gifts and long culture and discipline, a perfect command of plain and proper language—aiming, also, at nothing else than just to say plainly what so pressed for utterance—he and his audience stood at once in living contact and sympathy with each other, mind with mind, soul with soul, and not only face to face. Hence the hold which he maintained upon them while, half-

hour after half-hour, time unnoted by him or them, they hung upon his lips. Hence, whilst, with all his solemn intensity, he stood for the most part outwardly calm and self-controlled, the crowds before him were stirred and swayed by feelings that could not be restrained; tears, sobs, outcries, burst forth on every side. His words, more than those of any preacher of whom there is record, seemed to go with a direct impact, not seldom with a sudden and startling shock, into the very core of the awakened sinner's consciousness and heart, and shrieks, sudden fits, cases of fainting and insensibility, of men and women "dropping down as dead," were of no infrequent occurrence. And yet this was not because his preaching dealt in horrors. Rather it was because he described, with peculiar vividness and power, at once the holiness and the tender compassion of God as at once the Judge and Saviour of men. Men, convinced by the same sudden spiritual revelation of their own grievous sin against their God and of the loving-kindness of that God towards them, especially as revealed in the gift and mission, the life and death of Jesus Christ the Son of God, were overwhelmed by the startling view of this new world of spiritual truth and meaning. It was as if at a stroke the vision was opened to them, of heaven above and hell beneath.

Armed with such "weapons of warfare" against the kingdom of darkness, John Wesley, after his own spiritual conversion through the instrumentality of his Moravian teacher, Peter Böhler, went forth to do his life-work as a soldier of Christ. He began to be everywhere followed and everywhere spoken against. Wherever he preached, crowds gathered in larger and larger volume to hear him; but, at the same time,

church after church was shut against him. As Gambold, at this period, said in a letter to Wesley, "it was the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ's sacrifice and atonement which seemed to constitute the special offence of the Cross.

This doctrine strips men altogether of their own righteousness, and so offends their pride; it also teaches the "real presence" of the Divine Spirit; insists on the present supernatural power of God to inspire repentance and faith, and to renew the soul; on the present supernatural power of Jesus Christ to save the sinner; and thus to the "natural man," to the "mind of the flesh" which "receiveth not" these "things of the Spirit of God," it is a "stumbling-block" and "foolishness." There was nothing else but this "offence of the Cross" in the case of John Wesley to stir up special enmity against him. He offended no man's prejudice wantonly; he committed no sins against propriety or cultivated taste; he preached like a scholar and a gentleman. Nevertheless the prejudice and offence spread and deepened, till, after no great while, scarce a church in London or elsewhere was left open to him, while the crowds that waited upon him, whenever he did preach, were greater and greater. This led him, after preaching for a while in his own room at the "Foundery" and elsewhere, eventually to become a "field-preacher." It is well known that his first out-door sermon was preached near Bristol, in April, 1739, after Whitefield had already set him the example. From this time open-air preaching became one of his great means, perhaps his greatest means, of mission pioneer work. It was, of course, in his open-

air sermons that his great characteristics as a preacher were most fully developed.

Of the effects which attended his preaching, some illustrations have already been incidentally given. I can only further give a very few specimens. But what must have been the power of the preaching, which, for eight evenings in succession, in the splendid early summer season of 1742, held vast crowds spell-bound, while in Epworth churchyard Wesley preached from his father's tomb, his last discourse being his most powerful and prolonged, and addressed to the largest multitude. On the last day but one (Saturday, June 12th), a striking circumstance took place. Wesley's subject in preaching was, the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith.

"While I was speaking," says Wesley in his Journal, "several dropped down as dead, and among the rest such a cry was heard of sinners groaning for the righteousness of faith, as almost drowned my voice. I observed a gentleman there who was remarkable for not pretending to be of any religion at all. I was informed that he had not been at public worship of any kind for upwards of thirty years. Seeing him stand as motionless as a statue, I asked him abruptly, 'Sir, are you a sinner?' He replied with a deep and broken voice, 'Sinner enough,' and continued looking upward, till his wife, and a servant or two, who were all in tears, put him into his chaise and carried him home." The stricken, staring, statue-like master, the weeping wife and servants, the broken-down man lifted into his carriage like a helpless load, and carried off, deep wounded, to his house—what a picture have we here!

One other illustration I will give. Those who will go to Wesley's Journals may find many more. This is of a different cast from the others I have given. In the midst of a mob, "I called," Wesley writes, "for a chair. The winds were hushed, and all was calm and still. My heart was filled with love, my eyes with tears, and my mouth with arguments. They were amazed; they were ashamed; they were melted down; they devoured every word."[1]

Such was Wesley as a preacher when in the prime of his powers, and when fierce opposition concurred with providential call and opportunity to stir and kindle all his faculties and energies for the greatest work which God can summon any man to do.

I am, of course, aware that the description I have now given of the character of Wesley's preaching will surprise some, even of my well-informed readers, and that it is not in accordance with the popular conception of his preaching. It is many years since the late Dr. James Hamilton, in an article in the *North British Review*, gave pictorial expression, in his own vivid way, to the mistaken idea which has grown up in some quarters respecting Wesley as a preacher. He sketched him as, "after his morning sermon at the Foundery, mounting his pony, and trotting and chatting and gathering simples, till he reached some country hamlet, where he would bait his charger, and talk through a little sermon with the villagers, and remount his pony and trot away again." A more unfounded and misleading specimen of fancy-painting than this it would be impossible to imagine; and one can only wonder where good James Hamilton picked

[1] Wesley's Journal, October 18, 1749.

up the ideas or the fictitious information which he deliberately put into this written form. He was altogether at fault in his picture. As Wesley was, during the greater part of his life, simply the most assiduous horseman, and one of the most spirited of riders, in the kingdom, riding ordinarily sixty miles (let it be remembered what the roads were in the middle of the last century) day by day, besides preaching twice or thrice, and not seldom riding eighty or ninety miles in the day; so, for many years, Wesley was frequently a long preacher—was often one of the longest preachers of whom I have ever read or heard—and never stinted himself of time when the feeling of the congregation seemed to invite him to enlarge, and when opportunity favoured. Of course, however, he preached at all times many more short sermons than long ones, because he preached commonly three times every week-day, and four or five times on the Sunday, and because his earlier sermons on the Sunday needed to be over in time for his hearers to attend Church service. But when he preached after Church hours, whether in the afternoon or the later evening, and on special occasions even on the week evening, he was, as I have said, for many years often a very long preacher. Let me give some instances of this, only premising that all the special instances of protracted preaching which I am about to cite occurred after Wesley had taken to field-preaching. He had been an earnest, and not unfrequently a long preacher before; but it was not until he began to address crowds of thousands in the open air, that his larger and grander powers as a preacher were called forth.

About sixteen or seventeen months after his con-

version, Wesley writes in his Journal as follows, under date October 7th, 1739 (Sunday):—

"Between five and six I called upon all who were present (about three thousand) at Stanley,[1] on a little green, near the town, to accept of Christ as their only "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." I was strengthened to speak as I never did before, and continued speaking near two hours; the darkness of the night and a little lightning not lessening the number, but increasing the seriousness of the hearers."

Wesley had already, before this service, preached three times on that day; and he preached yet once after it, "concluding the day" by "expounding part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount to a small, serious company at Ebly." Five services, therefore, that day, and among them one in which his sermon alone was nearly two hours long!

On Friday, the 19th of the same month, Wesley preached at Newport, in Monmouthshire, in the morning, and, coming to Cardiff about the middle of the day, he preached in the Shire Hall twice—in the afternoon at four, and again at six in the evening. He had a large congregation—"almost the whole town"—and, preaching from the six last beatitudes, he says, "My heart was so enlarged I knew not how to give over, so that we continued three hours." On Sunday, June 13th, 1742, he preached in Epworth churchyard—his own and his father's Epworth—standing on his father's tomb, and continued the service "for near three hours." This was his fourth service that day. On Wednesday, May 24th, 1745,[2] at Birstal, he "was constrained to continue his dis-

[1] Near Stroud.

[2] The anniversary of his conversion.

course *near an hour longer than usual*, God pouring out such a blessing that he knew not how to leave off." On Whit Sunday, the 14th of May, 1749, at Limerick, he began to preach at five in the morning, and, there being no liturgy and no lesson, but only the simplest service, three short singings, one short prayer, and a final benediction, besides the sermon, he yet kept the congregation till near seven, "hardly knowing how the time went." At Whitehaven, on a Saturday evening in September,[1] 1749, he preached from six to eight—a simple week-night service—which must have implied a sermon of not less than an hour and a quarter long; and at eight he met the Society. These instances may suffice to show how Wesley enlarged under special influences. Even when he was more than seventy years of age, he sometimes, on a week-night evening, was so drawn out as to "preach a full hour" in the open air—as, for instance, in the market-place of Caermarthen on the 21st of August, 1777

In Dr. Hamilton's article, to which I have referred, it was said that while Wesley could "talk through a little sermon with the villagers," he "seldom coped with the multitude." In the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* for December, 1847, will be found a paper from the pen of the venerable Thomas Jackson, who died in 1873, in the ninetieth year of his age, which examines and reproves the errors of that article. Mr. Jackson thus deals with the point now under notice:—

"That he preached to 'villagers,' so as to be understood by them, as his blessed Lord had done, will not

[1] September 23rd.

be denied; but that he 'seldom coped with the multitude' is notoriously at variance with fact. No man was accustomed to address larger multitudes, or with greater success. At Moorfields, Kennington Common, Kingswood, Bristol, Newcastle, in Cornwall, Staffordshire, and Yorkshire, immense multitudes of people were accustomed to congregate around him through a long series of years, and that with undiminished interest; and it may be fairly questioned, whether any minister in modern ages has been instrumental in effecting a greater number of conversions. He possessed all the essential requisites of a great preacher; and in nothing was he inferior to his eminent friend and contemporary, except in voice and manner. In respect of matter, language, and arrangement, his sermons were vastly superior to those of Mr. Whitefield. Those persons who judge of Mr. Wesley's ministry from the sermons which he preached and published in the decline of life, greatly mistake his real character. Till he was enfeebled by age, his discourses were not at all remarkable for their brevity. They were often extended to a considerable length, as we learn from his Journal; and yet, according to his oft-repeated statements, he did not know how to leave off and dismiss the people, for his mind was full of evangelical matter, and his heart was richly charged with heavenly zeal. In a sense higher than ever entered into the thoughts of Archimedes, as he himself states, he was often ready to exclaim, when addressing vast multitudes in his Master's name, 'Give me the where to stand, and I will move the world!'"

Such is the testimony of Thomas Jackson, the

author of the full and admirable *Life of Charles Wesley*, and the very accurate editor of Wesley's voluminous Works; who was himself born before the death of Wesley; who made all that related to him his life-study; who knew well some of the men who had known Wesley best; and who should himself have accomplished for the life of John Wesley what he has so excellently done as the biographer of Charles. The case being as Mr. Jackson has stated it, and as the extracts from the Journal, which have been given, prove it to have been, it is proper to explain how the erroneous ideas which have been current as to the character of his preaching have originated. Three causes may be assigned to account for them. One is hinted at by Mr. Jackson in the extract we have given. Mr. Wesley's was a very long life. Those of his people who had known him in his prime of strength and energy, had died before himself. The traditions as to his preaching, which have been current during the present century, have been mostly derived from those who had only heard him in his extreme old age, and, in many instances, on his hasty visits from place to place, when he would preach at seven o'clock on the week-night evening, or at five o'clock in the morning. But another, and perhaps more influential cause has been, that an inference as to the length and style of his spoken sermons has been erroneously drawn from his published sermons. How unwarranted any such inference must be, may be shown by a remark of his elder brother Samuel, made at the very beginning of Wesley's preaching career, —before he had begun field-preaching. In a letter addressed to Charles Wesley, but which refers to both

the brothers, Samuel says, under date December 1st, 1738: "There is a most monstrous appearance of dishonesty among you; your sermons are generally three quarters of an hour or an hour long in the pulpit, but when printed are short snips; rather notes than sermons."[1] If this was the case so soon after the brothers had broken away from the bondage of sermon-reading in the pulpit, it is certain that, in after years, except in special cases—such as a sermon to be preached before the University—Wesley's written sermons, which were ordinarily compositions having a definite purpose of theological statement and definition, must be regarded as altogether different in character from his preached sermons, delivered extempore, often after little or no written preparation.

Still another cause of the error I have been exposing must probably be found in the urgency with which Wesley, in various places, enjoins on his preachers, as a rule, to preach short, and the emphatic way in which he insists to them on the evils of long preaching. But it must be remembered that the great majority of Wesley's preachers were men whose stock of knowledge was very small, and who had received no intellectual training whatever. They resembled the plainest and most fervid of the Methodist local preachers or exhorters of to-day. The same rule could not be applicable to him as to them. But, indeed, the great Methodist preachers of Wesley's lifetime—his most powerful lay-helpers—were, as a matter of fact, none of them short preachers, while most of them were often, if not usually, very long preachers. Such were Walsh and Bradburn, and Benson and Clarke.

[1] Jackson's *Life of Charles Wesley*, vol. i. p. 151.

The fact, at any rate, is as I have stated it, so far as respects the preaching of Wesley; and although I must abstain from being entangled in this study with the thread of Charles Wesley's life, closely associated though he was with his brother, yet I may add, in passing, that for not a few years Charles Wesley was as long and often as powerful a preacher, even as he was as hard-riding and hard-working an itinerant evangelist, as his brother John.

In showing that Wesley, instead of being a talker of neat little sermons, was, in his prime of life, frequently a long preacher, and sometimes one of the longest preachers of whom we have any knowledge, I have not only shown how mistaken has been the popular tradition respecting his special characteristics as a preacher, but I have also proved that there must have been a remarkable charm about his preaching. No one has done such justice to Wesley's gifts as a preacher as Southey, especially in the interesting chapter in the first volume of his biography of Wesley, entitled *Scenes of Itinerancy*. Not only, indeed, in the *Life of Wesley*, but in *The Doctor*, and in his *Common-place Book*, he has given evidence of the careful study he bestowed on the subject, and the admiring appreciation with which he realised the preaching powers of Wesley.

Cowper's lines on Wesley will not be forgotten while we are on the subject of his preaching. They were written when the fire and flame of Wesley's early manhood were long gone by. He speaks of him as one—

> "Who, when occasion justified its use,
> Had wit as bright as ready to produce;

Could fetch from records of an earlier age,
Or from Philosophy's enlightened page,
His rich materials, and regale your ear
With strains it was a privilege to hear.
Yet, above all, his luxury supreme,
And his chief glory was the Gospel theme:
There he was copious as old Greece or Rome,
His happy eloquence seemed there at home;
Ambitious not to shine or to excel,
But to treat justly what he loved so well."

I apprehend that the last four lines give a most true and happy description of Wesley's ordinary ministry, while, so far as any mere written composition can give an idea of how Wesley preached, when his aim was specially to convince and awaken, perhaps his last sermon before the University, to Kennicott's description of which I have already referred, and the wonderful "applications" contained in his first *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, may help us to such an idea; but it must always be remembered, that no written compositions can really approach the energy and directness with which Wesley preached when vast crowds hung upon his lips, to whom he was declaring "the whole counsel of God."

Of the clear, strong, intense style in which Wesley could, if he felt it to be necessary, combine doctrinal argument with declamatory invective of the most scathing terribleness, we have an instance in his famous sermon on "Free Grace." But for the publication of that sermon, we should at the present time have had no conception of what his powers were in that kind; and it was owing only to very special circumstances, and much against his liking, that Wesley felt himself constrained to publish that sermon.

It is well known that Dr. Johnson had a great

reverence for Wesley, and much enjoyed his society. In a letter to Wesley himself, he compliments him as "Plato." Cowper, also, in the lines we have quoted, refers to Wesley's power, in social conversation, of bringing forth the treasures of ancient philosophy. Let any competent judge read the plainly written but elevated and beautiful sermon on "The Original of the Law," mentioned some pages back, and he will at once recognise the impress of a mind which, while it avoided all display of learning, was deeply imbued with the training and results of philosophy—of the highest and best philosophy, whether ancient or modern—so far as philosophy had advanced in Wesley's day.

Wesley the evangelical preacher, not Wesley the ritualist priest, is, I repeat, the founder of Methodism. The whole of Methodism unfolded from this beginning. To provide and promote Gospel preaching and spiritual fellowship was the one work of original Methodism; fellowship including a perpetual individual testimony of Christian believers as to salvation by grace, through faith. Preaching and fellowship—this was all, from first to last; true preaching, and true, vital Christian fellowship, which involved opposition to untrue preaching, and to fellowship not truly and fully Christian. From this unfolded all Wesley's history as an ecclesiastical leader. His co-operation for a season with the Moravians, and then his separation from them, when their teaching became for the time mixed up and entangled with demoralising error; the foundation of his own Society—that of "the people called Methodists;" his separation from his "brother Whitefield" and from Calvinism; his field-preachings;

his separate meeting-houses and separate communions; his class-meetings, and all the discipline of his Society; his Conference and his brotherhood of itinerant Methodist preachers; his increasing irregularities as a Churchman; his ordinations, and the virtual though not formal or voluntary separation of his Societies from the Church of England—all resulted from the same beginning—from his embracing the doctrine of "salvation by faith"—from his receiving the instructions of Peter Böhler, the Moravian minister—from his going forth to preach the true old Gospel to the world.

On these matters I can but slightly touch in this volume. They demand separate treatment.[1] The personal character and gifts and the inner humanity of Wesley the evangelist is my leading theme.

[1] I have dealt with them in my volume on *The Churchmanship of John Wesley.*

CHAPTER IV

WESLEY'S ITINERANCY AND PERSECUTIONS.

THE churches were closed against Wesley; only in London, and a little later in Bristol, had he even rooms in which to preach. Nor, if he had had command of rooms, or, indeed, even of churches, would they have been of any use in presence of the crowds, often numbering many thousands, that flocked to hear him preach. Therefore he had no alternative but to preach in the open air, while the crowds gathered around him in the fields. But for his field-preaching, accordingly, he could not have been a pioneer preacher —he could not have done in England the work he was to do.

But it was not on this account alone that field-preaching was a necessity for Wesley. In 1740 the lowest working-classes were not only much more ignorant and barbarous than are even the most degraded classes of colliers and iron-workers at the present day, but they were, by even a deeper and wider gulf, alienated from all the public services of religion. Such classes can never—they could not then, they cannot now—be attracted within well-appointed and well-ordered places of worship, with their well-dressed congregations, by any eloquence, or any power of startling speech, or any influence what-

ever. But they flocked in thousands to hear the great field-preacher. "What multitudes," says Wesley, in 1745 (in his last *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*), "both in Kingswood and the fells about Newcastle, some years since, spent the Lord's Day either in the alehouse, or in idle diversions, and never troubled themselves about going to church, or to any public worship at all. By what other means was it possible they should have been plucked out of the fire? Had the minister of the parish preached like an angel, it had profited them nothing; for they heard him not. But when one came and said, 'Yonder is a man preaching on the top of the mountain,' they ran in droves to hear what he would say; and God spoke to their hearts. It is hard to conceive anything else which could have reached them." For such preaching, besides the qualifications spoken of in the last chapter, Wesley had also the advantage of a voice of unequalled range, although there was nothing stentorian in its tones. On one occasion he had the distance measured to the farthest point where his voice could be distinctly heard—the distance was one hundred and forty yards. He was therefore in every way peculiarly fitted for the work, from which he did not finally desist till more than half a century had passed away, his last open-air sermon having been preached at Winchelsea, in 1790, only a few months before his death. But, however well fitted he might be for the work, it was a work involving the severest self-sacrifice, and very often much hazard and hardship. It was not easy or pleasant work for "flesh and blood." In the same *Appeal* from which I have already quoted, he thus breaks out in an apostrophe

to his fellow-clergy of the Church of England: "Who is there among you, brethren, that is willing (examine your own hearts) even to save souls from death at this price? I do not speak now with regard to conscience, but to the inconveniences that must accompany it. Can you sustain them, if you would? Can you bear the summer sun to beat upon your naked head? Can you suffer the wintry rain or wind, from whatever quarter it blows? Are you able to stand in the open air without any covering or defence, when God casteth abroad His snow like wool, or scattereth His hoar-frost like ashes? And yet these are some of the smallest inconveniences which accompany field-preaching. For beyond all these are the contradiction of sinners, the scoffs both of the great vulgar and the small; contempt and reproach of every kind; often more than verbal affronts, stupid, brutal violence, sometimes to the hazard of health or limbs or life. Brethren, do you envy us this honour? What, I pray, would buy you to be a field-preacher? Or what, think you, could induce any man of common sense to continue therein one year, unless he had a full conviction in himself that it was the will of God concerning him?" Wesley's words in this description and appeal were well within the actual truth. There is here no exaggeration, as will presently be seen.

Already, in 1739, soon after he began field-preaching, Wesley had announced in his published Journal the broad principle which was to govern his after life: "I look upon all the world as my parish." Accordingly, his business was to obey every call which beckoned him into the midst of a large, necessitous, and accessible multitude—going, as far

as possible, first of all to those who seemed to need him most. There were conditions and circumstances which hindered him, more or less, all through his course, from visiting—or, if he visited once or twice, from revisiting—certain parts of the country

It is a popular error to suppose that John Wesley preached in all parts of England, or that he left Societies behind him studding all the land over. There were wide stretches of England—and even some almost entire counties—in which, while Wesley lived, Methodism was all but unknown. He well understood the conditions which were prohibitory of success, so far as the establishment of Methodism was concerned, or at least of his own Methodist Society, and he knew better than to waste his labour anywhere, while he found his strength and time and resources all too little for the work which lay before him in accessible and inviting fields.

Wesley devoted his labours chiefly to districts of the country where the population was large, where there was free opportunity for them to follow his ministry, if they had a mind to do so, and where he would have it in his power, night after night and visit after visit, at not too long intervals, to follow up his work by blow after blow, by stroke upon stroke. He gave little labour or attention to fashionable places of resort. These, with the fashionable circles of London, were wisely left to another branch of the general Methodist movement, to the care of the Countess of Huntingdon and her chaplains, including among these, from time to time, Whitefield when he was in England. He left almost unvisited most of the purely agricultural regions of England, the sparse

peasant population, bound to their field work, the torpid tenant farmers, the coarse squires, made up a state of society which offered the heaviest impediments and the fewest opportunities for his work. The collier, and in general the miner, of whatever class, the foundry-man, the hand-loom weaver, and, in the later years of his ministry, the water-power-loom worker; the spinner in cotton, flax, or hemp; the "statesman" freeholder, especially when, as in the northern dales, he was found in the neighbourhood of the lead-miner; or the small yeoman, where he neighboured, as in Cornwall, on the miner or the fisherman;—these, and such as these, with the skilled artisan and the day-labourer of the towns, formed the material on which Wesley chose to bestow his labours. If Epworth and the surrounding region had been wholly and purely agricultural, he would not have been able for eight successive days to command in the churchyard crowded congregations. But the inhabitants of Epworth not only grew hemp and flax, but spun them and manufactured them into sacking and bagging. And those that grew such crops, like the hand-loom weaving small farmers of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and many other parts of England, were a very independent class of people. These things should be borne in mind in following the course of Wesley's labours. He found the agricultural population of Ireland very different from that of England, and much more impressible. During Wesley's lifetime the success of Methodism in Ireland was relatively very great. Indeed, it was the only form of Protestantism which can be said to have won any spiritual success there. Emigration, for the last fifty

years, has drained away Irish Methodism to an extent very injurious to that island, however beneficial to America.

The chief fields of labour, outside of London, which Wesley pioneered during the first ten years of his itinerant work, were Bristol and its neighbourhood, Newcastle-on-Tyne, with the dales westward, and towards the south as far as Leeds and the neighbourhood, Cornwall, and Staffordshire, with some intermediate districts, which, however, were not of equal importance. In after years, when persecution had, for the most part, ceased to arrest or attract him, Wesley's itinerancy was distributed more and more widely over the kingdom. For many years before he died, it included, annually, the three kingdoms and parts of Wales. To the end, however, Cornwall and Newcastle with the dales received special attention from him. He delighted to visit these extremities of England. His three homes, so to speak, were London, where he spent several months every year, Bristol (or Kingswood School in later life), and Newcastle, in the Orphan House (so called, but not actually used accordingly). Here he had rooms, and in the retirement of Kingswood or Newcastle he loved to read or write, although his best-beloved places of rest and quiet for such purposes were in the houses of intimate friends near London. His own calculation, made and verified several times during the later years of his life, was that he never journeyed less than 4,500 miles in any year. The average must have been greater than this. He rose always at four, and preached every morning, with very rare exceptions, at five. He preached two, often three, sometimes four times, in the day. On

Sundays especially it was not unusual for him to preach four times. His ordinary sermons—generally preached to village congregations—were short, as well as plain and simple. But on special occasions he was not only, as we have seen, one of the most powerful, but one of the longest preachers of whom we have any record. Mere exhortations, indeed, or brief anecdotal addresses, would not, unless brought in occasionally as a variety, have agreed with the principles on which he based his awakening ministry. For, to use his own expression, he never failed to "lay a deep foundation of repentance." This made his proclamation of a free and present salvation for truly convinced and penitent sinners, as safe and true a message to declare as it was welcome to the awakened souls who accepted and embraced it.

Wesley's appointments to preach on his itinerating rounds were made many weeks beforehand. In order to meet them, it was necessary for him to keep up an extraordinary average rate of travelling, whatever might be the state of the roads or the weather. His determination, indeed, not to derange his plans or disappoint those who waited for him, led him to encounter almost incredible hardships, and to perform journeys such as, it would be quite safe to say, except by him, and the companion he carried with him, were never performed either for love or money. Till he was in his seventieth year, all his journeys were done on horseback. To ride from sixty to seventy miles, besides preaching twice or thrice, and this day after day, was an ordinary performance with him. There were times when he went far beyond this measure. It must be borne in mind that, in those days, except

the main road from York—and possibly also from Preston—to London, there were no turnpike roads in England north of the Trent, and that even the turnpike roads in those days, long before Macadam, were often very far worse for travelling than the worst by-roads of to-day. Yet Wesley tells us in his Journal, on one occasion, that, the direct road being under water from the floods, he rode in one day a distance of more than ninety miles between Bawtry and Epworth, and, at the end, "was little more tired than when he rose in the morning." Another time, in Scotland, he reached Cupar, "after travelling near ninety miles," and "was little more tired than when he rose in the morning."

In the early weeks of 1745 the winter was exceedingly severe. Deep snows had covered the ground in the north of England. A thaw had followed, and then a hard frost, so that the ground was like glass. In such weather Wesley was journeying towards Newcastle. He and his companion were obliged to dismount and lead their horses, the poor animals, notwithstanding all the care that could be used, falling down again and again. After 8 P.M. they reached Gateshead Fell, which was a pathless waste of snow; but in their perplexity a Newcastle man overtook them, and guided them safe into the town. "Many a rough journey," Wesley says, "have I had before, but one like this I never had, between wind and rain, and ice and snow, and driving sleet and piercing cold." Even in such circumstances he had travelled two hundred and eighty miles in six days on horseback.

The winters of 1746 and 1747 seem to have been

as severe as that of 1745, and Wesley had similar hardships to endure. In February, 1747, horse and man were well-nigh swallowed up in the snow-drifts near Stamford. One morning, the servant said to Wesley that there was no travelling that day; such a quantity of snow had fallen that the roads were quite blocked up. "At least we can walk twenty miles a day with our horses in our hands," was Wesley's reply, and off they went accordingly.

Perhaps the longest, hardest, and most trying ride ever done by Wesley was one of twenty hours, between Shrewsbury and Lampeter, in July, 1764, when he was sixty-one years old, a journey which indeed was one of no little danger as well as hardship. An account of this journey is given in Wesley's Journal, but is too long to quote. One of the most striking of his many "hair-breadth 'scapes and moving accidents by flood and field" was that which took place at Lelant, near Hayle, in Cornwall, when Wesley was on his way from Helston to preach at St. Ives. In order to keep his appointment it was necessary to cross the sands, where the tide was already setting in with perilous swiftness. Wesley, nothing daunted, told the driver to "take the sea," and go fearlessly across. The horses swam, and the chaise, after a sharp and alarming struggle, got safely through. Driver and passenger were both completely drenched. Wesley having taken care to get the driver warm clothing, a good fire and excellent refreshment, and having also cared for the horses, went himself to preach according to appointment, without waiting for a change or refreshment. The driver lived to tell the story long years after Wesley's death.

Energy, promptitude, punctuality, governed his itinerancy till the end. Long after he was eighty years of age, he continued his journeyings with little abatement of the work accomplished, only that he used a carriage, and no longer rode on horseback, as he had done till ten or fifteen years before. When he was seventy-one years old, a sudden call reached him at Congleton to go to Bristol on pressing business. He took chaise forthwith, and drove to Bristol, gave two hours to his business, and immediately returned to Congleton, having done the distance of two hundred and eighty miles, and his business, in little more than forty-eight hours, and "no more tired," he records, than when he set out.

All other labours, trials, or hardships that he met with in the course of his itinerancy were, however, of trifling account in comparison with the cruel and ferocious persecutions which he encountered from mobs, often, unhappily, led by those who were of superior station, and called themselves gentlemen—by military men, or, more frequently, by magistrates and clergymen; these last, indeed, more than any other class, being the prompters of these disgraceful assaults. It must be remembered, in connection with these sad histories, that Wesley never gave any provocation or pretext for persecution. He was not only in his conduct always the gentleman; he was always, both in conduct and appearance, the clergyman, the calm and scholarly clergyman. It was his custom to preach in his gown and cassock, and his deportment and language in preaching were devout and becoming. Nor, in his discourses, did he use a style of language and address which could be regarded as offensive. On

the contrary, as on his first visit to Newcastle, of which I have spoken, so always he strove, especially in the opening of his discourses, to win the attention and conciliate the confidence of his hearers. When Wesley was sharp and cutting, it was in dealing with the more cultivated classes. He approached an out-door multitude with words which were gentle as well as earnest. It was contrary alike to his temper and his tactics, to his courtesy, and to his common sense, to say or do anything which might justly offend the taste of those with whom he had to do. He brought with him no followers, and he had no accompaniments which were likely to create disorder. Nor, as a matter of fact, did his crowds, the crowds that merely gathered to hear him preach, ever create disorder or give reasonable ground of annoyance. His audiences out of doors were more orderly than those which assembled within the churches. They covered the moorland, the common, the wide pasture-land, but no fences were broken, and no mischief was done. An "awful stillness," as we often read, pervaded the vast assemblies, broken only by the touchingly sweet as well as solemn sound of the vast volume of singing, by the clear, sonorous, musical voice of the speaker, which floated far away over the ranks of the hearers, or by the sobs, now and again, or sometimes even the outcries, of the spiritually awakened. In all this there was nothing to give offence, nor in fact were outbursts of persecution ever provoked from among his hearers by his preaching. The persecutions were organised before he came on the ground. The mobs were gathered to forestall him, and prevent him from preaching. At the bottom of all was the "offence of the Cross," the

dislike of the clergy to the doctrine which Wesley preached. With misrepresentations of the doctrine were mixed up all sorts of false rumours and reports. It was said that the Wesleys were friends of the Pretender, were Papists in disguise; and much more worse than this. Considering the Jacobitism which had always prevailed among High Churchmen, especially Oxford men; considering that some of the original Oxford Methodists, as well as William Law, formerly so highly esteemed among them, had been Nonjurors and "Divine Right" men; and considering that the worst persecutions took place during that period of our history which is marked by the plotting, hatching, and outburst of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745,—it is the less difficult to understand how it was possible for such unfounded and scandalous reports to obtain currency in regard to the Wesleys, and for such ferocity to be exhibited by the mobs, not in one place only, but in many different parts of the kingdom.

The root of the matter, however, was the hatred by the clergy of the "new doctrine," so called, although it was the doctrine not only of St. Paul, but of the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England. And the point just now to be noted is, that Wesley gave no just occasion for the persecutions which assailed him and his people, but that the persecutions were organised by men of the classes and professions which, most of all, were likely to have influence with the populace, and which also, most of all, were bound to observe the law, and keep the public peace.

In these terrible persecutions, which were chiefly in Staffordshire, Cornwall, Yorkshire, and Durham, Wesley's perfect placid intrepidity, his loving calm-

ness and serenity of spirit, amid whatever rage of violence, and under whatever provocations and assaults, must always remain a wonder to the historian. His heroism was perfect; his self-possession never failed him for a moment; the serenity of his temper was never ruffled. Such bravery and self-command and goodness, in circumstances so terrible and threatening, was too much for his persecutors everywhere. He always triumphed in the end.

Those who would gain any true idea of the outrageous extremities of barbarous and heartless cruelty which the frenzied mobs of Staffordshire, Cornwall, and elsewhere—Staffordshire most of all—inflicted on the Methodists during the period to which I refer, must consult Wesley's Journal or Dr. Stevens' *History of Methodism*. I cannot here give more than a few instances of Wesley's own way of enduring persecution, when he went to share his followers' tribulations and to comfort and encourage them.

At Walsall, in 1743, Wesley received many savage blows whilst he was dragged during the night through and round the town, and from magistrate to magistrate. The noise on every side, he says, was like the roaring of the sea. Many cried, "Knock his brains out! down with him! kill him at once! crucify him!" "No, let us hear him first," shouted others. He at last broke out aloud into prayer. The ruffian who had headed the mob, a bear-garden prize-fighter, was struck with awe, and turning to him, said, "Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head." Then an "honest butcher" cried out for him, and, laying hold bravely on four or five of the most violent of the

rioters, thrust them away. The people fell back, and, escorted by the prize-fighter, he escaped to his lodgings. The next day Wesley went away, but rode through the town. He says, "Every one I met expressed such cordial approbation, that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard." He went to Nottingham, where his brother Charles was then preaching. "He looked," says Charles Wesley, "like a soldier of Christ. His clothes were torn to tatters." Charles Wesley soon after visited Wednesbury and Walsall. He received into "the Society," among others, the late captain of the mob. Charles asked him what he thought of his brother. "Think of him?" said he,—"that he is a man of God; and God was on his side when so many of us could not kill one man."

This was in Staffordshire in 1743. In 1745 he visited Cornwall, where fierce persecution had arisen. A warrant was taken out against him, and he was taken into custody. When, however, his persecutors saw what manner of man he was, they were filled with confusion, and instead of taking him to prison, with awkward politeness they conducted him to his inn, saying that they would call again the next day. But he saw no more of them. The same evening, when he was preaching in the open air at Gwennap, three "gentlemen" rode furiously into the crowd. They cried out to seize him for the army, and when the people sang a hymn, as their reply to the interruption, they struck at them right and left, one of them seizing Wesley by the cassock and dragging him away by the arm. Soon, however, finding that he had laid hold on no fanatic, but a gentleman of a calibre and quality quite surprising to himself, he pretended that he

meant no harm, and requested Wesley's company at his own house, an honour which Wesley declined.

At Falmouth the next day still more serious perils awaited him. Here there was a terrible riot. Wesley was driven to his lodgings. The mob, following him, forced their way into the house, and breaking down, by main force, the door of the room where he was, he stood before them. Wesley stepped forward bare-headed, and said, "Here I am. Which of you has anything to say to me? To which of you have I done any wrong? To you? or you? or you?" He continued speaking till he reached the middle of the street; there he took his stand, and addressed them as his "neighbours and countrymen." He had his usual success. Several of the crowd cried out, "He shall speak. Yes! yes!" Others swore that no man should touch him. He was conducted in safety to a house, and soon after left the town in a boat.

It was in proportion to the recency and imperfection of the social civilisation of different parts of the country that persecution held its ground against the Wesleys. Where general barbarism lingered most, and law and order had not been long and deeply established in the habits of the population, and by the organisation of a competent magistracy, the mob was allowed to have its own way. For months together riot was triumphant in Staffordshire, and was suffered to go to the lengths of pillage, and all but consummated murder. In or near London, on the contrary, and at Bristol, mob violence was put down firmly and effectively at the very beginning of the Methodist field-preaching, four or five years before the riots in Staffordshire and Cornwall came to an end. In these

districts it was the moral ascendency of the Wesleys and their followers which gained the victory at length. In Ireland, somewhat later, the Methodists were assailed with ferocity which equalled that of the English mobs, and Charles Wesley, with several of the preachers, was presented by the grand jury of Cork as "a person of ill-fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of His Majesty's peace," with the prayer added that he might be "transported." There, however, the visit of John Wesley, close following this infamous presentment, during the summer of 1748, was a peaceful and happy progress.

Perhaps the most systematic and carefully-organised of all the outrages on law and on humanity which the records of English history can supply, was the riot in North-East Lancashire, from Colne as a centre, to which John Wesley and his friend Grimshaw, the famous parson of Haworth, were exposed in 1748. This riot was deliberately planned and arranged by "George White, M.A., minister of Colne and Marsden," who invited popular support in his antagonism to Wesley in a published sermon, which was preached both at Colne and also at Marsden, in the summer of 1748. The mob which this clergyman raised by systematic enlistment and public proclamation, brutally beat Wesley and Grimshaw, and cruelly ill-treated many of the Methodists, some of whom they threw into the river from a rock twelve feet high.

Wesley, however, far outlived all persecution, at least as directed against himself personally. In his latest years he records with amazement how he had come to be everywhere an honourable person. The churches had been shut to him for nearly fifty years.

At length they were opened to him on every hand. Bishops paid him reverence, clergymen flocked to hear him and to assist him in administering the Lord's Supper. Most of all was public honour done to him in those neighbourhoods where fifty years before he had been most fiercely persecuted. It was in 1738, when he was thirty-five years old, that he was convinced by Peter Böhler of his theological errors, and came to his Saviour first by the way of a simple living faith. In 1739 he began field-preaching. In 1791 he died, full of years and honour. In 1790, at Winchelsea, he preached his last open-air sermon.

CHAPTER V

WESLEY'S DEALING WITH ANTINOMIAN PERVERSIONS OF EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE.

WHEN the level sun shines through a fog, every object is itself distorted, and casts an exaggerated and distorted shadow. So every great truth, seen through the medium of false bias and of misconception, wears the aspect of counterfeit error. This is true even of the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel. We learn from St. Paul's writings, that his teaching as to the righteousness of faith was by some so perverted as to undermine the rightful authority of God's holy law. It is no wonder, accordingly, if false doctrine arose, from time to time, among Wesley's followers. The special feature of the Wesleyan theology was, that it not only taught salvation by faith, but that this salvation was a conscious salvation, conscious reconciliation with God, conscious power over sin. The characteristic danger, accordingly, connected with this special teaching was, lest illusion should be mistaken for true spiritual consciousness; an illusive self-persuasion of pardon and acceptance, for the true peace of God through believing, wrought by the Spirit of adoption; an illusive self-persuasion of spiritual consecration and inward holiness, for the genuine Christian love of God and man, bringing forth at once in heart and in life

all the fruits of holiness, both experimental and practical, all the "fruits of the Spirit." Wesley was well aware of this danger, and he endeavoured to guard against it. Most strenuously and incessantly did he insist that the profession of justification through faith should be tested by the "outward" as well as the "inward" witness,—by a reformed life and power over sin in daily practice, as well as by the experience of conscious peace. Nor was he less strenuous or persistent in inculcating that no mere feelings, no excitement or rapture or inward exaltation, could of themselves afford any assurance at all of inward consecration and matured holiness, apart from the daily evidence, in sight of all men, of a "holy walk and conversation."

From the beginning, however, he found his work hindered and scandals produced by such errors as have now been indicated. The Antinomian quietism of the teaching of Molther, and other unworthy but seductive Moravian teachers, at Fetter Lane in 1739, was his first great trouble. Other troubles followed from a different quarter, but which agreed in the result that they tended to Antinomianism; and from time to time he was harassed by outbreaks of the same general description, resulting from the erroneous teaching, sometimes combined with the scandalous practices, of some of his own preachers.

The effect of all this was to lead Wesley to a severity of censure in regard to spurious and antinomianly luscious evangelical preaching, so called, not less wholesome than unusual. What I am about, indeed, to quote is from a private letter to Miss Bishop, one of his most esteemed correspondents; but

though more plain-spoken than any of his public utterances was likely to have been, it is all the more valuable in its private and informal character, as showing the inmost spirit of the writer, and the character which he desired to see impressed both upon the teaching of his preachers and the lives of his followers. "To speak freely," he says, "I find more life in the Church Prayers than in any formal extemporary prayers of Dissenters. Nay, I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called Gospel sermons. The term has now become a mere cant word. I wish none of our Society would use it. It has no determinative meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about Christ or His blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, 'What a fine Gospel sermon!' Surely the Methodists have not so learned Christ." This was written in 1778, when Wesley was seventy-five years old, but had still thirteen years to live. At this time Antinomianism was taking strong hold, here and there, of Dissenting Churches.

The history of James Wheatley, indeed, one of Wesley's own preachers, between 1750 and 1760, had deepened the dislike of Wesley to the luscious, sentimental kind of preaching, which has often been mistaken for Gospel preaching, and which is so commonly associated with Antinomian tendencies. This man, after, for a time, achieving an extraordinary popularity, was in 1751 proved, by undeniable and superabundant evidence, to have been teaching privately, and also practising, gross immorality. For this cause, because he had "wrought folly in Israel,"

and "given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme," Wheatley was disowned by the Wesleys in 1751, but among certain latitudinarian professors at Norwich found a congenial sphere, and was for some years exceedingly popular in the city, until at length, in 1759, he had to leave in disgrace, arising out of numerous and flagrant scandals. This man's preaching having corrupted the taste of the Methodists, Wesley wrote a letter upon the subject. He describes his preaching as having been an "unconnected rhapsody of unmeaning words," like Sir John Suckling's

> "Verses, smooth and soft as cream,
> In which was neither depth nor stream."

"Yet," he adds, "to the utter reproach of the Methodist congregations, this man became a most popular preacher." Of the other preachers not a few were led to preach after his manner, first in Ireland and then in England. Wesley describes "this new manner of preaching, entirely new," as he says, to the Methodists, "as a preaching of what is spoken of as the Gospel, without any reference to the law; as speaking much of the promises, little of the commands." He says, "The Gospel preachers (so-called) corrupt their hearers; they vitiate their taste, so that they cannot relish sound doctrine; and spoil their appetite, so that they cannot turn it into nourishment; they, as it were, feed them with sweetmeats, till the genuine wine of the kingdom seems quite insipid to them." He says that these men had "exalted themselves above measure," as if they alone "preached Christ, preached the Gospel;" and at the same time had deeply despised their brethren, calling them "legal

preachers, legal wretches," and (by a cant name) "Doctors" or "Doctors of Divinity." He traces the effects of such preaching in the grievous decline both in numbers and in godly earnestness and consistency of the Societies to which such preachers had ministered, and contrasts these injurious effects with the actual fruits of John Nelson's work in Yorkshire, John Nelson being one of the old-fashioned preachers whom the new "Gospel preachers" had taught the people to despise. "These," he says, in a sharp address to such as had been led away by Wheatley's example and popularity, "had been fed with that wholesome food which you could neither relish nor digest. From the beginning they have been taught both the law and the Gospel. God loves you; therefore love and obey Him. Christ died for you; therefore die to sin. Christ is risen; therefore rise in the image of God. Christ liveth evermore; therefore live to God, till you live with Him in glory."

Nothing gave Wesley more disappointment and pain, or more hindered his work, and for a while injured his credit, than the extravagances (in 1762–3) of George Bell and others who held with him. These persons were professors of "Christian perfection," but had not received, and did not teach the doctrine as Wesley taught it. As taught and professed by them, it amounted, without doubt, to a self-delusion. They had a subjective sense or impression of Divine influence and perfect self-consecration, and therefore they believed and maintained that they were in all things filled and led by the Spirit. No man could teach them. They professed, George Bell especially, to be endowed with extraordinary spiritual gifts, and, in

particular, with the gift of prophecy. Bell went great lengths, indeed, followed by his infatuated admirers, and even foretold the day of the world's end. Such examples of extravagance, connected with unguarded and really Antinomian doctrine on the same subject of "Christian perfection," have reappeared from time to time, and may be traced even in recent history, on both sides of the Atlantic. Wesley seems to have been much too tender and too tardy in dealing with Bell and his extravagances. His Societies suffered greatly in consequence. But some of his words, addressed to those who were more or less infected with Bell's spirit and tendencies, are worth reproducing in this chapter. Dealing with the professors of perfection, whom he desired to instruct and bring to a true judgment of themselves, he urges them with a succession of paragraphs of which I will quote the headings. They professed that they had been filled through the Spirit with "love, joy, peace." Wesley reminds them that the complete and inseparably united "fruit of the Spirit," in truly sanctified persons, according to the teaching of St. Paul, included, besides "love, joy, peace," and as no less indispensable, "gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance" (Gal. v. 22, 23). And accordingly he proceeds to say, "Some are wanting in 'gentleness.'" [Here particular and searching instances or illustrations are given.] "Some are wanting in 'goodness.'" [Then again come illustrations.] "Some are wanting in 'fidelity,' a nice regard to truth, simplicity, and godly sincerity. Their love is hardly without dissmulation," etc., etc. "Some are wanting in 'meekness, quietness of spirit, composure, evenness of temper,'

etc. "Some are wanting in 'temperance,' etc. You have not what I call perfection; if others will call it so, they may. However, hold fast what you have, and earnestly pray for what you have not."

It would have been interesting to trace the characteristics of the preachers who most fully imbibed his own spirit: of John Nelson, as remarkable for sobriety as for zeal, for love and good works as for faith and fervour, for sound sense as for devotion, whose word it seemed as if no adversaries could gainsay, and of whom Southey says that "he had as high a spirit and as brave a heart as ever Englishman was blessed with;" of John Downes and Christopher Hopper, of Alexander Mather and Joseph Cownley, and of others of his lay-helpers, who, in preaching, were mighty both to awaken from sin and to build up in faith and holy doctrine, who "fed" the early Methodists "with knowledge and understanding." But this cannot be done in this volume. I can only say that, by their preaching, and by their spirit and life, these men accomplished work scarcely inferior in solidity and thoroughness to that wrought by their chief.

Such was Wesley's manner of dealing with "false prophets" who taught an Antinomian counterfeit of the Gospel doctrine of justification by faith; and with high-soaring professors who taught a spurious doctrine of "holiness" or "perfection," such as "made void the law," and lost sight of the practical tests and fruits of sanctified and matured Christian character.

The great body, however, of Wesley's itinerant helpers preached a truly "saving Gospel," a Gospel of salvation by faith, which was wonderfully attended and attested by the fruits of righteousness.

CHAPTER VI.

WESLEY AS THE ORGANISER OF A NEW EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY.

GREATER justice has been done to Wesley in his character and capacity as an organiser than perhaps in any other respect. Much has been written in regard to the organisation which he established—his Society, his Conference, and all thereto appertaining. Probably there has been some exaggeration in the view given of this aspect of his character. I have explained that it is not my purpose in this volume to deal at any length with a subject on which I have written elsewhere in separate publications, and on which so much has been written by others.[1] I am chiefly concerned with aspects of his character which have not hitherto, in my opinion, been shown in their true light, or brought out in just relief—especially with his human affections, his intellectual character, and his gifts and powers as a preacher. Nevertheless, in his work of organisation as well as his other work, Wesley kept in view the same objects which governed his whole life, and under the inspiration of which he became the preacher and apostle that he was. There-

[1] The separate publications chiefly referred to above are, *The Connexional Economy of Methodism*, and *Church Organisations—Primitive and Protestant.*

fore I am about to give in this chapter a very brief and succinct outline of that organisation which, for purely evangelical ends and purposes, he was instrumental in moulding and maturing. In so doing, I shall also furnish information which will help to a fuller understanding of some other parts of this volume.

His conversion made Wesley an evangelist. He had a forgotten Gospel to preach—the Gospel by which men were to be converted, as he had been, and to become "new creatures." This result, this new birth, he had learnt once for all, was not dependent on any priestly prerogative or service, or on any sacramental grace or influence. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." To raise up, accordingly, by his preaching and personal influence, a body of converted men who should themselves become witnesses of the same truth by which he himself had been saved, was henceforth to be Wesley's life-work. This was the inspiration under which he became a mighty preacher, a flaming evangelist, "a burning and shining light." This also made him an organiser of his living witnesses into Societies and Society classes. In appeal to the multitude was the preacher's public power; in the class-room or the Society meeting was the private and personal influence. The vital link between the pulpit and the class-meeting was the doctrine and experience of "conversion." Thus it plainly appears that the organised fellowship of Methodism has its vital descent, not from Wesley the ritualist of Oxford, but from converted Wesley the evangelist.

In 1739, Wesley became possessed of an old build-

ing in Moorfields, called the "Foundery," and transformed it into a meeting and preaching house. About the same time, in Bristol and the neighbouring colliery district of Kingswood, he found himself obliged to become the owner, much against his will at first, of premises for the purpose of public preaching and religious meetings. Here was the beginning of that vast growth of preaching-houses and meeting-rooms, all of them for nearly fifty years settled on Wesley himself, which became afterwards, through Wesley, the property of the Methodist Connexion.

The Society which Wesley established at the Foundery in 1739—near to where City Road Chapel now stands—was the first Society under the direct control of Wesley, and herein was the actual and vital beginning of the "Methodist Society," that is, of Wesleyan Methodism and all its kindred Churches. Hence the Wesleyan Methodists celebrated their Centenary in 1839. In 1743, Wesley published the rules of this Society. His brother Charles's name was joined with his own at the foot of these rules in their second edition, dated May 1, 1743, and so remained in all later editions while Charles Wesley lived.[1] Those rules are still the rules of Wesleyan Methodism, so far as relates to membership of the Church. Since Wesley's death they have not been altered. In 1742 the Societies were divided into classes, each class being placed under the charge of a "leader." The class-leaders of Methodism, together with the local stewards, became in course of time, and have remained for nearly a century past, the ordinary disciplinary council in every Society, known as the Leaders' Meeting.

[1] He died in 1788.

From first to last there is no trace or colour of any specially Anglican character in the organisation of Wesley's Society or Societies—for the Societies collectively constituted "the Methodist Society," or the "United Society." Moravians or Dissenters might have entered the fellowship, and, before long, many did enter it who had either been Dissenters, or, at any rate, had seldom or never entered a parish church. What would to-day be called the "unsectarian" character of his Society, was indeed, in Wesley's view, one of its chief glories. All the time, however, this "unsectarian" Society was only another sect in process of formation. Indeed, Wesley himself, for many years before his death, had seen that, unless the rulers of the Church should come to adopt, in regard to his preachers and preaching-houses, a liberal policy of recognition, this might, after his death, be the outcome of his life-work. Nor did he, in his latest years, shrink with any repugnance from the prospect; rather at the last he would appear to have even rejoiced in it. Very early, indeed, Wesley had been driven, sorely against his will, to make a distinct separation of his Societies in London and at Bristol from the Church of England. The clergy not only excluded the Wesleys from their pulpits, but often repelled both them and their converts from the Lord's Table. This was first done on a large scale, and with systematic harshness and persistency, at Bristol in 1740. The brothers believed that they had no alternative but to administer the Sacrament themselves in their own preaching-rooms. The practice having thus been established at Bristol, the original Society at the Foundery naturally claimed the like privilege, the more so as too many of the London

clergy acted towards Wesley's followers in the same manner as those at Bristol. These administrations, once begun, were afterwards steadily maintained—one of the Wesleys, or else some co-operative or friendly clergyman, being always present, whether in London or at Bristol, to take the service. Both on Sundays and on week-days, in these first centres of Methodist work and influence, full provision was made for the spiritual wants of the Societies, quite apart from the services of the Church of England. The only link with that Church was that the sacramental administrators were clergymen.

In 1741, Wesley began to employ lay-preachers. The story is well known how he hastened up to London from Bristol, to put an end to his schoolmaster Maxfield's preaching at the Foundery. He took his venerable mother's wise advice, however, and heard Maxfield preach himself. Thenceforth lay-preaching became a Methodist institution. One High Church prejudice after another was giving way; and this story registers the last struggle of one of these prejudices. Wesley could by no means have done his work without his lay-itinerants; he would have been as helpless as a general without officers. These itinerant preachers, stationed from year to year in wide "circuits," conducted the simple services in the Methodist preaching-rooms, and were in effect, as to most points, the spiritual pastors and guides of the Societies. But they did not administer the Sacraments, for the reception of which the members had to go to Church, if they were allowed to have them there, or else to wait—often for long months or even years—for the coming round of Wesley or his brother Charles, or, in later years, of

Dr. Coke. Long before Wesley's death, however, there was a growing desire among the Societies, especially as the itinerant preachers improved in quality and faculty, to have the Sacraments administered by their own preachers. This came to pass universally after Wesley's death, and he himself took steps in the later years of his life which prepared the way for it.

In the beginning of 1738, Wesley had been a High Churchman; and even after his conversion in that year he continued for several years to hold, in the abstract, High Church views as to points ecclesiastical. But in 1746 he abandoned once for all his ecclesiastical High Churchmanship. He relates in his Journal, under date January 20, 1746, how his views were changed by reading Lord (Chancellor) King's account of the primitive Church. From this time forward he consistently maintained that "the uninterrupted succession was a fable which no man ever did or could prove." One of the convictions derived by him at this time from reading Lord King's book was, that the office of bishop was originally one and the same with that of presbyter; and the practical inference drawn by Wesley was, that he himself was a "scriptural episcopos," and that he had as much right as any primitive or missionary bishop to ordain ministers, as his representatives and helpers, who should administer the Sacraments instead of himself to the Societies which had placed themselves under his spiritual charge.

This right, as he conceived it to be, he was often moved to exercise, that he might satisfy the needs and outcries of his Societies; but he refrained until he felt it was impossible to resist the call of Providence on behalf of the American Methodist Societies. In 1784,

when the Colonies had become an independent nation, Wesley ordained his trusted friend and helper, Dr. Coke, a clergyman of the Church of England, as Superintendent (*Επίσκοπος*) for America, where Coke ordained Francis Asbury presbyter and also superintendent, and where Coke and Asbury together ordained the American preachers as presbyters. Thus American Methodism was constituted an independent Church. To-day the Methodism of America, taken collectively, is the largest aggregate of national Protestantism in the world. In 1785, Wesley ordained Methodist ministers for Scotland. In 1786, he ordained a minister for Antigua and another for Newfoundland. A number of other preachers were ordained by him during the next three years. In particular, he ordained Alexander Mather, in 1788, not only deacon and elder, but also superintendent; and on Ash-Wednesday, 1789, he ordained Henry Moore and Thomas Rankin presbyters, for the especial service of the Societies in England.

In 1784, Wesley had legally defined his Yearly Conference. His preachers had been accustomed for forty years to meet with him in annual Council or "Conference." To "the Conference" — consisting legally of a hundred ministers, chosen and appointed by name, who themselves are required to fill up the vacancies in their number from year to year—the legal instrument or Deed of Declaration of 1784 gives supreme jurisdiction as to the appointment of preachers to the chapels of the Connexion,[1] and as to the admission and expulsion of ministers. In practice, all the powers, whether original or acquired, of the Conference

[1] For a term not to exceed three years.

have, since Wesley's death, been shared by all the ministers attending the yearly sessions of the Conference, whether members of the "Legal Hundred" or not.

There is yet one point which should be referred to in this brief sketch of Wesley's work of organisation. The preaching-houses—afterwards called chapels—of "the Connexion" (as Wesley's community of ministers and Societies came to be called) were all, as I have stated, settled originally on Wesley himself, so far as respected the appointment of preachers to officiate in them; afterwards they were, under the powers of Wesley's Deed of Declaration, similarly and to the same limited extent settled on the Conference, which became the heir of Wesley's powers and prerogatives. On no point did Wesley insist more strenuously than this. To give the appointment of ministers to the trustees was the custom of Presbyterians and Dissenters. Wesley saw that such a settlement of his places of worship would destroy the itinerancy, which he knew to be vital to the existence of the Connexion. He saw also that it would leave no security for continuity of doctrine, in accordance with his own views and teaching, as set forth in his standard works. As a matter of history, he knew, moreover, that meeting-houses under trustees had become the burial places at once of orthodoxy and of earnestness, as proved by the history of the Presbyterian and of a considerable number of the Dissenting Churches. For such reasons Wesley rigidly adhered to his own principles, in spite of great influence brought to bear upon him as respects this question. In the West Riding especially, the stronghold of Presbyterianism and of Dissent, as for example

at Dewsbury and Birstal, the struggle of the laymen was very resolute to obtain their own way in this matter. But, with an inflexibility such as Wesley only showed when great principles were clearly at stake, he resisted them at all cost, preferring the loss of some adherents, or even of the meeting-houses themselves, at the time, rather than the adoption of a policy which he was convinced would have been fatal to all the ends of his evangelical work. The organisation of preaching-houses and Societies which he left (under his own well-considered safeguards and conditions), remains still as the strong foundation on which has been built up the vastly enlarged and developed Methodism of later generations.

PART IV.

WESLEY'S INTELLECTUAL POWERS, HIS DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER, AND HIS LATER LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

WESLEY AS A THINKER.

BECAUSE Wesley was eminently a man of action, it seems to have been inferred by some writers that he was not a man of contemplation; he is admitted to have been an acute logician, but he is represented as having been comparatively wanting in the capacity of philosophic reflectiveness. On this subject I have already said something, and have had occasion to furnish one notable example of his philosophical insight and capacity. But it seems to deserve more full and explicit notice than in any incidental references I have been able to give to it. I have no wish to exaggerate Wesley's philosophical capacity; but it is an entire mistake to suppose him to have been at all wanting either in the taste or the capacity for philosophic study and reflection. His intellectual tastes inclined him very strongly to the study, not only of languages, but of philosophy and theology—

of philosophy, perhaps, hardly less than theology. His Journals supply abundant evidence that, in the midst of his life of incessant activity and absorbing care, and devotional intensity of feeling, he yet kept up his interest in philosophic studies. He read and criticised Locke with acute intelligence. He not only read, but explained to his preachers, Bishop Browne's great work, *The Procedure of the Human Understanding*, preferring Browne to Locke. In his letters to Mr. John Smith,[1] he says that "in the midst of all his labours he had abundantly more temptation to be a saunterer *inter sylvas academicas*, a *philosophical sluggard*, than an itinerant preacher." His reflectiveness, indeed, tended even to scepticism. In the same remarkable letters, he says that "he had a thousand times doubted of the divinity of the Scriptures after the fullest assurance preceding."

In his sermon on "The Good Steward," he uses the striking language which I am about to quote:—

"It is so far from being true that there is no knowledge after we have quitted the body, that the doubt lies on the other side, whether there be any such thing as real knowledge till then; whether it be not a plain, sober truth, not a mere poetical fiction, that

> "'All these are shadows, which for things we take,
> Are but the empty dreams which in death's sleep we make,'

only excepting those things which God Himself hath been pleased to reveal to man. I will speak for one. After having sought the truth with some diligence for half a century, I am, at this day, hardly sure of anything but what I learn from the Bible. Nay, I

[1] Dr. Secker, Bishop of Oxford, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury.

positively affirm that I know nothing else so certainly that I would dare to stake my salvation upon it."[1]

It was, in fact, the strength of the contemplative element in Wesley which largely helped, during not a few years of his earlier life, to give Mysticism so considerable a power over him. He loved his college, and his cloister, and his "academic groves;" he loved

> "To join with him calm Peace and Quiet,
> Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet;
> And add to these retired Leisure,
> That in trim gardens takes his pleasure;
> But first, and chiefest, with him bring
> Him that yon soars on golden wing,
> The cherub Contemplation."

He seems to have had little love for any philosophy that had not an element of Mysticism in it; he would

> "Unsphere
> The spirit of Plato, to unfold
> What worlds or what vast regions hold
> The immortal mind that hath forsook
> Her mansion in this fleshly nook."

He found delight in Tauler's philosophic and mystical theology, and in Madame de Bourignon's poetry. It is true, he was of a very social temper, also, when he could find congenial companions; and this balanced his recluseness. It is also true that, while his mere intellect and his tastes craved for solitude or select society, his moral sensibilities and

[1] Here, again, we are struck with that resemblance and yet contrast between Wesley and Newman to which I have referred already. Substitute merely "the Church" for "the Bible" in the above extract, and it expresses the views of the author of the *Apologia pro Vitâ Suâ* and of the *Grammar of Assent*. All hinged upon Wesley's accepting Scripture teaching instead of traditional influence and prescription.

his conscience continually prompted him to go abroad and minister to bodily and spiritual need and distress; but that did not annul the other side of his nature. It was, doubtless, the strong contemplative element in Wesley which formed so close a link between himself and his friend Gambold, who was first an Oxford Methodist, then a Mystic, and then a Moravian, and always predisposed to Quietism. Wesley was very fond of Gambold's poetry—poetry of superior merit and of great refinement, marked especially by a subtle and spiritualistic philosophic tendency—and he not seldom quotes it.

I have quoted Wesley's own words in regard to the philosophical scepticism which was a leading feature of his intellectual character. So conscious was he of his tendency to scepticism, that he was afraid, as he tells us, to prosecute the study of mathematics, because he found it to undermine his faith in all moral conclusions. He was one of the keenest and most sceptical of historical critics, as I shall immediately show; but, like Dr. Johnson, while acutely and intrepidly critical in regard to matters which he conceived to lie fully within the scope of his critical understanding and faculty, he durst not indulge the same temper of mind, or assume the same right of critical judgment, in regard to the world of spiritual powers and realities. The principle on which he acted in judging of things pertaining to the world of consciousness, and of invisible spirits and forces, he himself explains in his comments on a certain case which he records in his Journal. I give his words:—

"One of the strangest accounts I ever read; yet I can find no pretence to disbelieve it. The well-known

character of the person excludes all suspicion of fraud; and the nature of the circumstances themselves excludes the possibility of delusion. It is true, there are several of them which I do not comprehend; but this with me is a very slender objection; for what is it which I do comprehend, even of the things I see daily? Truly not 'the smallest grain of sand or spire of grass.' I know not how the one grows, or how the particles of the other cohere together. What pretence, then, have I to deny well-attested facts, because I cannot comprehend them?"[1]

Thus did the philosophical sceptic justify what religious sceptics stigmatised as his credulity. On the other hand, he was not slow to retort against the sceptics of his day the charge of credulity as respected common mundane things.

In historical criticism, Wesley was fifty years in advance of his age; many illustrations might be given to show how penetrating, independent, and impartial were his views as a student of history. He recognised fully and immediately the merits of Hooke's *Roman History*, pronouncing it far the best he had seen. He says, "I admire him for doing justice to many great men who have been generally misrepresented; Manlius Capitolinus, in particular, as well as the two Gracchi." At the same time he objects that "he recites at large the senseless tales of Clelia swimming the Tiber, Mucius Scævola, and twenty more; and afterward knocks them all on the head. What need, then, of reciting them? We want history, not romance, though compiled by Livy himself."[2]

"To-day," he says, "I read upon the road a very

[1] *Works*, vol. iii. p. 324. [2] *Ibid.* iii. p. 449.

agreeable book, Mr. Dobb's *Universal History.* But I still doubt of many famous incidents which have passed current for many ages. To instance one: I cannot believe there was ever such a nation as the Amazons in the world. The whole affair of the Argonauts I judge to be equally fabulous, as Mr. Bryant has shown many parts of ancient history to be; and no wonder, considering how allegories and poetic fables have been mistaken for real histories."[1]

"I read to-day," he writes (April 25th, 1748), "what is accounted the most correct history of St. Patrick that is extant; and, on the maturest consideration, I was much inclined to believe that St. Patrick and St. George were of one family. The whole story smells strong of romance. To touch only on a few particulars:—I object to his first setting out; the Bishop of Rome had no such power in the beginning of the fifth century as this account supposes; nor would his uncle, the Bishop of Tours, have sent him in that age to Rome for a commission to convert Ireland, having himself as much authority over that land as any Italian bishop whatever. Again, I never heard before of an apostle sleeping thirty-five years, and beginning to preach at threescore. But his success staggers me the most of all: no blood of the martyrs is here; no reproach, no scandal of the Cross; no persecution to those that will live godly. Nothing is to be heard of, from the beginning to the end, but kings, nobles, warriors, bowing down before him. Thousands are converted, without any opposition at all; twelve thousand at one sermon. If these things were so, either there was then no devil in

[1] *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 388–9.

the world, or St. Patrick did not preach the Gospel of Christ."[1]

In a similar spirit of critical scepticism he comments on Dr. Leland's *History of Ireland*, repudiating altogether the notion that the Irish "were ever a civilised nation, till they were civilised by the English." He is bold enough to deny that "Ireland was, in the seventh or eighth century, the grand seat of learning;" and especially singles out as incredible the pretence that in the college at Armagh, one of the "many famous colleges" of the island, there were seven thousand students. All this he "ranks with the history of *Bel and the Dragon*."[2]

On the page following these remarks he quotes with approval his friend Dr. Byrom's explanation of the origin of the name of England's patron saint. "I think," he says, "that there can be no reasonable doubt of the truth of his conjecture that Georgius is a mistake for Gregorius; that the real patron of England is St. Gregory (who sent Austin, the monk, to convert England), and that St. George (whom no one knows) came in by a mere blunder."[3]

I do not by any means intend to adopt or vouch for all Wesley's criticisms; I wish only to show the critical quality of his intellect. His whole treatment of the history of England, of which he wrote himself a succinct epitome, was distinguished by remarkable independence of mind. He held to the side of Horace Walpole in his *Historic Doubts*, so far as respected the character of Richard III. He gave up, after investigation, the strong prejudices of his youth in favour of "the Martyr" (Charles I.); and when his brother

[1] *Works*, vol. ii. p. 94. [2] *Ibid.* iii. p. 501. [3] *Ibid.* p. 502.

Charles, in a letter, remonstrated with him on this account, his reply was that he could not "in conscience say less evil of him." High Tory as he was by nurture and education, he not only revised, but altogether changed, his views respecting the controversies of Charles the Second's reign. Referring to Baxter's life, he says in his Journal, "In spite of all the prejudice of education, I could not but see that the poor Nonconformists had been used without either justice or mercy; and that many of the Protestant bishops of King Charles had neither more religion nor humanity than the Popish Bishops of Queen Mary."[1] And again he says, referring to the persecutions of the Presbyterians in Scotland, "O what a blessed governor was that good-natured man, so-called, King Charles the Second! Bloody Queen Mary was a lamb, a mere dove, in comparison of him!"[2] Candour pure and impartial, perfect honesty of purpose in research, and, in judging, incorruptible love of truth,—this is the prime and highest qualification in a historian or a historical critic. More than anything else, it helps to the attainment of the truth in history. This quality John Wesley possessed—pure and fearless honesty and candour.

Wesley himself, as I have said, often laughed at the credulity of his sceptical contemporaries. He criticises severely, and in some detail, the Abbé Raynal's *History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the Indies*. He stigmatises "several of his assertions as false in fact," singling out in particular the assertion that Batavia is a healthy place. He declares that his account of China is "pure romance,

[1] *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 311-2. [2] *Ibid.* iii. p. 311.

flowing from the Abbé's fruitful brain." He "supposes" that the account of the Peruvian nation is taken from "that pretty novel of 'Marmontel.'" He inquires if "many of his assertions do not so border upon the marvellous, that none but a disciple of Voltaire could swallow them,—as the account of milk-white men, with no hair, red eyes, and the understanding of a monkey."[1]

He was very keen in his criticism of all contemporary books of travel, very suspicious of "travellers' stories." In the bosom of "the lovely family at Balham," he writes, "I had leisure on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, to consider thoroughly the account of the Pelew Islands. It is ingenious, but I esteem it a dangerous book. I cannot believe that there is such a heathen on earth as Abba Thulle, much less such a heathen nation as is here painted. 'But what do you think of Prince Lee Boo?' I think he was a good-natured, sensible young man, who came to England with Captain Wilson, and had learned his lesson well; but just as much a prince as Tomo Chachi was a king."[2] This entry was made within about fifteen months of Wesley's death, when he was eighty-six years old.

It was impossible that such a thinker as has now been described could be in any sense a narrow Christian. Dean Stanley has, I believe, claimed Wesley as being, in some sort, the father of modern Broad Churchmanship; and although Wesley's theology was not by any means in harmony with that of our Broad Church leaders, being thoroughly evangelical, there is some colour of plausibility in the claim. Wesley was a very large-souled and loving-hearted

[1] *Works*, vol. iv. pp. 120–1. [2] *Ibid.* p. 476.

Arminian. He insisted on the heart and the life as the seat and test of Christian character, not on the creed. "I read," he says, "to-day part of the meditations of Marcus Antoninus. What a strange Emperor! And what a strange heathen! Giving thanks to God for all the good things he enjoyed,—in particular for his good inspiration, and for twice revealing to him, in dreams, things whereby he was cured of otherwise incurable distempers. I make no doubt but this is one of those 'many' who shall 'come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,' while 'the children of the Kingdom'—nominal Christians—are 'shut out.'" [1]

[1] Journal, October 11th, 1745.

CHAPTER II.

WESLEY'S DISPOSITION AND CHARACTER.

I HAVE written at some length of Wesley's intellectual characteristics, because, so far as I know, justice has never been done to them. No biographer has brought out the side of his character on which I have last dwelt. As to his accomplishments as a linguist, in which few men in England excelled him—as a logician—as a poetical critic of remarkably true and severe taste, and as himself no mean poet—as to his temper, skill, and admirable talents as a controversialist—and his eminent merits as one of the purest and best writers of English in his own or any age—I say nothing. These subjects have been dealt with by others. But my sketch of his personality would be defective indeed, if I did not, in addition to the intellectual side of his character, hold up to the light a view of Wesley as regarded on the side of his temper and disposition as a man with men and women, as a kinsman and friend, as a comrade and leader. What will be said in this chapter, indeed, on the subject will be but partial and fragmentary. The volume I am writing will have failed in its purpose, if Wesley's character, in all its leading phases, does not come increasingly into view, as the reader follows its course. Still, it will be convenient to bring into view in this

chapter some points of importance which do not fall within the scope of any of the other chapters.

It is not necessary to deny that in listening to men's own statements about themselves, Wesley's charity was so extreme as fairly to lay him open to the charge of credulity. On his properly intellectual side he was, as I have shown, no more credulous than Dr. Johnson or Cardinal Newman. On the side of charitable hopes and judgments he may have been open to the charge. His brother Charles, somewhere in his Journal, writes that John "was born for the benefit of knaves." John hardly denied the impeachment. When it was necessary to investigate or to watch and study a suspicious case, he would send for his brother Charles to come and assist him. The greater suspiciousness of his brother, and his occasionally keener penetration and insight into personal character, were of advantage by the side of John's unsuspicious confidingness. Nevertheless, we have John's own distinct statement, that, after all, he was more seldom deceived in his estimate of men, and more seldom betrayed by them, than his brother Charles. He had in fact, and in no ordinary measure, precisely what Miss Wedgwood thinks that he was lacking in—great faculty of sympathy and insight, as respected individuals; always, however, seeing more directly and fully the good or the capacity of good in them than the evil. He was necessarily, indeed, to a very large extent, an absorbed and preoccupied man. He had no leisure to give his mind to trifles, and sometimes, especially in his earlier years, omitted to relate to those interested, pleasant and proper intelligence respecting friends or relatives. But this

was not owing to any real want of keen and ready sympathy with others. He was, by the testimony of all who knew him—of such witnesses as his friend and follower, Henry Moore, and as his friend, the Irish Churchman, Alexander Knox—one of the most pleasant, sunny, sociable of companions, although he could not give more than two hours at a time to Dr. Johnson, who highly esteemed him and his society, hereat the great dictator was sorely disappointed and ined.

Wesley was a quick-tempered man, and sometimes, in his haste, said sharp things; but he was yet quicker to apologise, if he had spoken too strongly, than to be angry. He was incapable of malice; he was one of the most forgiving of men. He was anything but a Stoic, but he never indulged in vain regrets any more than in settled resentment. Scarcely any other man could have carried such vast cares so lightly as he did. "I feel and I grieve," he says, "but, by the grace of God, I fret at nothing."

He was full of wit and pleasant humour, as all who have read his Journal, or any of the larger biographies of him, well know. Southey, Stevens, and Tyerman all give excellent instances of this. The one fact which I have found it difficult to reconcile with any sense of humour, and with his general sunniness and kindliness of disposition, is the seemingly morose asceticism of his rules for the management of Kingswood School. In an earlier page of this volume I have suggested what appears to be the only solution of this apparently strange incongruity—this monastic unkindliness. Public schools, in Wesley's time and for many years afterward, were rude and harsh

Spartan republics, where play meant coarse violence, and where free, unfettered intercourse among the boys meant mutual barbarising and demoralisation. Those who do not know the now happily almost incredible truth as to the state of public boarding-schools in the last century, will not be able to do justice to Wesley in this respect. Wesley himself had had a bitter experience at the Charterhouse. As for the mere hardness of the Kingswood regulations, it must be remembered that the regulations of all public schools were hard: very early rising, regular hours for prayer and worship, rigid fare, semi-monastic rules and usages, and special dress, prevailed everywhere alike — in Church of England schools, in Quaker schools, and in Moravian schools.

While writing on the subject of Wesley's temper and disposition, I cannot but make some special reference to the manner in which Mr. Tyerman has, as to certain points, dealt with the character of Wesley in his mature and later life.

I wish to say a word, in the first place, about the history of Mr. Alexander M'Nab, and the affair at Bath with respect to this preacher and the Rev Edward Smyth, of Dublin, in 1779. Mr. Tyerman has given a full and careful history of the whole affair, for which he deserves our thanks. But while he enters fully into the position and convictions of the preacher who thought himself aggrieved, he does not seem truly to have realised Mr. Wesley's own position and necessities. While we cannot but strongly sympathise in a certain sense with the case of M'Nab, it is, I think, clear that Wesley could not have acted otherwise than he did, and that his conduct in the whole affair deserves the

highest praise. It was a crisis in which Wesley could not have given way. But although he remained firm, he respected the feelings and convictions of his preacher; treated him with generous consideration, and, notwithstanding the opposition of his brother, afterwards received him back into favour. So long as Wesley lived, he could not absolutely part with his personal power over his preachers. He used it in this case to provide an opening for an Irish Methodist clergyman for whom it seemed necessary to provide; various and important interests, both in England and in Ireland, appearing to require that he should so provide. He was accustomed to move his preachers from place to place according to the exigency of the hour; nor could his great work have ever been carried on without the exercise of his discretion and authority in so doing. Some years before, he had been obliged suddenly to remove Mr. M'Nab from Edinburgh, where he had had no more wisdom than to preach controversially against the doctrine of "final perseverance," and so had made his position too hot to bear. In the present case, the special ground of complaint against Mr. Wesley was that M'Nab was removed from Bath to make way for Mr. Smyth, who had come over to labour under Mr. Wesley, and for whom, as an ordained clergyman, Bath seemed to be a peculiarly suitable sphere. Surely Wesley cannot be blamed for using his admitted power in the present instance. M'Nab rose up against Wesley with ecclesiastical arguments, arguments as to pastoral rights and so forth, which could have no force as against Mr. Wesley, because of the specific and undeniable relations which subsisted between the Patriarch of

the Methodist itinerancy and his followers, and which were a necessary element in the covenant subsisting betwcen them. M'Nab's arguments and his resistance were no doubt edged very keenly by his antipathy to the Church of England, and his jealousy of any superiority claimed by, or allowed to, her clergy. But Wesley could not have submitted himself, and all his prerogatives and powers, to the theoretical claims of one of his junior preachers, a strong Scottish *doctrinaire*, a Presbyterian theorist, however amiable or estimable, without breaking down his authority and discipline altogether. He showed, however, no vindictiveness, and hastened, at the earliest opportunity, to reinstate his contumacious follower, who, one is not much surprised to learn, ended his course as an Independent pastor, having, before he left Methodism, been for a time in correspondence with the unfaithful preacher whom Mr. Tyerman brands as "the traitor Atlay" In this, as in some other matters, a larger general view of Wesley's position and principles—of the whole situation—would, I cannot but think, have led Mr. Tyerman to a different conclusion from that which he has pronounced.

It appears to me that Mr. Tyerman has failed to apprehend fully the position in which Wesley found himself as to the Church of England, or the powerful reasons which made it impossible for him to accept in full the position of the founder of a new and distinct Church—a Church outside the Church of England, and apart from all other Churches. I do not hesitate to declare my own deepening conviction, that Wesley could not, as a wise man—could hardly as a sane man—have taken any other position than that to

which he held so fast. He was not called by Providence to organise a distinctly and fully independent Church. If he had undertaken the task, he must have undertaken responsibilities which, at his time of life, in his circumstances, and with his antecedents, he could not possibly have sustained. He did all he could to meet the feelings and views of those who demanded separation. He was not obstinate or immoveable; he was eminently candid and open-minded. He yielded whenever it was necessary to yield. He moved as far as he was obliged, though no farther. This, I think, was not weak timidity on his part, but was dictated by considerations of wise Christian expediency Nothing else in Wesley would have been consistent or tolerable.[1] In the many instances, accordingly, in which Mr. Tyerman censures Wesley for not fully recognising the claims of his preachers to the full status of pastors, and to constitute of and by themselves the supreme and independent governing authority for the Societies, I think him to be in error. I do not admit that the Methodist preachers had any necessary Divine right to be ordained as presbyters, still less to be constituted the supreme and sole governing body and fountain of authority for the Societies of Methodism, as erected into an independent and organised Church.

At the same time, I, of course, fully recognise the fact (as Wesley himself, with beautiful candour, always did, notwithstanding the violent antagonism of his brother Charles), that, from their point of view, the demands of the preachers were very natural, and

[1] This subject is admirably treated by Dr. Gregory in his *Handbook of Church Principles*, pp. 80–82.

not at all unreasonable; that, apart from Wesley's personal history and necessities, and from the prejudices and feelings of many within Methodism, and of many without, very much was to be said for the claims they urged.

In the first part of this volume I have spoken of the austerity with which Mr. Tyerman deals with Wesley, in all cases in which the propriety of his conduct seems at all open to controversy. This characteristic appears very strongly in his manner of treating the history of Wesley's relations with two eminently useful and devoted women, and in his judgments respecting the women themselves. In the instances to which I refer, he seems to me to have done unintentional but serious injustice, not only to Wesley himself, but to these excellent women—women with whom Wesley was in intimate relations.

It will be anticipated that I refer, as one of these cases, to Wesley's relations with Grace Murray. As to this case, Mr. Tyerman sums up his judgment in these strong words: "John Wesley was a dupe; Grace Murray was a flirt; John Bennet was a cheat; Charles Wesley was a sincere, but irritated, impetuous, and officious friend."[1] I confess that I cannot accept this summary judgment. The case is unquestionably one of no little difficulty and perplexity. But Mr. Tyerman cuts the knot with a coarse knife, whereas it needs to be untied with a skilful hand. Grace Murray is not justly described as "a flirt." All we know of her, apart from this affair, renders it very improbable that she should have proved herself to be such in this case. She was a woman, not only of

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. ii. p. 55.

singular tact, but of attractive modesty, of perfect propriety, and of deep piety[1] All we know of her would lead to the conclusion that she would have been not an unworthy helpmeet for John Wesley. Wesley worked in her company during many months, and closely watched her for years. We have his distinct, deliberate, and emphatic testimony as to her gifts and graces, her whole character and deportment. Her Diary remains to us; and we know the superiority of her character and the savour of her piety in her long after-life as the wife and widow of John Bennet.[2] Mr. Tyerman himself has furnished full evidence on this point. Such a woman it is hard to suspect of being guilty of "flirtation" with John Bennet, still more with one so revered as Wesley, and more still with Bennet and Wesley together. The temper of "a flirt" would certainly have shown itself much rather in her relations with inferior men than with Wesley. No doubt she was strongly attached to Bennet, on whom she had attended assiduously as a nurse for six months, and who seems to have thought himself secure of her affections, and of her acceptance of himself whenever he should be prepared to ask it. But if others had not interfered —had not represented to her that she would be sinning against Christ and His Church, that she was under temptation herself, and was making herself a

[1] There is nothing in the history of her residence at the Orphan House, as read by a fair interpreter, inconsistent with this conclusion.

[2] She married Bennet in 1749. He died in 1759, having, soon after his marriage, left Wesley and become the independent pastor of a number of scattered congregations. Mrs. Bennet died in 1803, at the age of 84.

tempter or cause of temptation to Wesley—she would, no doubt, have gratefully and humbly made herself Wesley's helper and cherisher for life. Those who, for various reasons, were opposed to Wesley's marrying Grace Murray, played continually upon her sensibility and tenderness of conscience, and thus kept her in most painful oscillation or vacillation. Sometimes, also, they did what they could to sow jealousy and suspicion in her mind, so as to alienate her, if possible, from Wesley. These persons naturally supported Bennet's suit and claim. Bennet himself exerted all his authority and influence in the same direction. It is possible to understand the perplexed history to which I have referred without imputing heartless trifling to Grace Murray, although she undoubtedly showed not a little weakness in the affair; but it is impossible to clear either John Bennet or Wesley's brother Charles from all obliquity of conduct in the part they took in this matter. Throughout, the character of Wesley himself shines most beautifully in connection with this affair, to him, without question, the most painful trial of his life. His own touching and beautiful poem on the subject remains in evidence of his feelings in the case.

From Mr. Tyerman's criticisms on the case of Mrs. Ryan I still more strongly dissent than from his judgment in the matter of Grace Murray. I think the principles on which he has dealt with this case are altogether wrong. The unfavourable antecedents of her early life are made much of—far too much of, in my judgment. But notwithstanding those antecedents, whatever they were, her proved character and

merits were such as to recommend her to the esteem and intimate friendship of some of the most excellent Christians of her time — Christians of high social propriety and breeding, as well as of pre-eminent Christian character, among whom Miss Bosanquet (Mrs. Fletcher), after John Wesley, was one of the most conspicuous. To assume that such a woman, because of her early life and connections, ought not to have been employed by Wesley as his housekeeper at Bristol, and a class-leader, is, I think, particularly unworthy of a Methodist historian, and opposed to the spirit of Christ's Gospel of grace. That Wesley was right in the confidence he gave to Mrs. Ryan, was demonstrated by the result. She was eminently useful and respected in situations of important trust, in which Wesley placed her. Where others had failed, she succeeded. No other woman could compare with her as matron and manager. She was a remarkably gifted and a most devoted woman. Her life, to its close, justified the confidence which Wesley reposed in her.[1]

Mr. Tyerman's judgment in these cases is singularly severe, as respects all the parties concerned, not excepting Mr. Wesley. He reflects upon Wesley for taking Grace Murray with him on a pillion in his journeys, several times, when there was special work for her to do. Surely he cannot be ignorant of the universal custom of Wesley's day for women to ride on pillion behind men, either father, brother, husband, affianced lover, trusted and reputable friend of suitable age, or man-servant. Mrs. Charles Wesley travelled many miles in this way behind preachers or man-

[1] She died at Miss Bosanquet's Yorkshire Home and Orphanage in 1768.

servants. To impute imprudence to Wesley in the matter in question is exceedingly strange. Mr. Tyerman condemns Grace Murray, again, because in her earlier life, being under terrible temptation at the time—temptation which assailed the very foundations of her faith—she yet persevered in meeting her class, and in all her other public engagements. To those familiar with the memoirs of such men as Richard Baxter, in former times, and Richard Treffry, jun., in later times and in Methodist circles, a censure of Grace Murray on such an account must seem passing strange. But Mr. Tyerman appears to have very little sympathy with spirits exercised by sore doubt and temptation. Wesley's doubts and fears and self-condemnation, soon after his conversion, appear to him to be a painful mystery; whereas to most others they will appear to have been not only natural in themselves, but an appropriate and valuable part of the discipline through which such a teacher and leader as Wesley could not but be expected to pass.

Mr. Tyerman more than intimates that Wesley was imprudent in keeping up an extensive and confidential correspondence with a large number of female disciples. Of that correspondence many samples have been printed. I would ask any one familiar with those letters, or who has fairly realised what Wesley was to the leading spirits throughout all his societies—their special personal pastor and spiritual father — or in what relation his personal instructions and influence stood to the whole work of Methodism throughout all the kingdom and in Ireland, to judge what Methodism would have lost if such a correspondence had not been kept up. It is scarcely too much to say, that

Methodism could hardly have been well sustained without it. Because of the wicked and insane jealousy of Mrs. Wesley, Mr. Tyerman decides that Wesley's correspondence with Mrs. Ryan, "pure and pious" as he justly declares it to have been, ought not to have been continued.

In this connection I may quote, as an illustration of Wesley's relations with interesting and superior women, part of what Alexander Knox writes to Hannah More as to Wesley's fellowship with Miss Knox. Having transcribed a note to himself, in which Wesley sends an earnest message to "My dear Sally Knox," declaring that he "loves her dearly, and shall be glad to meet her at our Lord's right hand," Mr. Knox proceeds as follows: "John Wesley's impressible nature inclined him to conceive such attachments, and the childlike innocence of his heart disposed him to express them with the most amiable simplicity. The gaiety of his nature was so undiminished in its substance, while it was divinely disciplined in its movements, that to the latest hour of his life there was nothing innocently pleasant with which he was not pleased, and nothing naturally lovely, which, in its due proportion, he was not ready to love. To interesting females, especially, this affection continually showed itself: of its nature and kind, what he says of my sister gives a striking manifestation."[1]

One marked feature of Wesley's character undoubtedly was his magnanimity—a magnanimity with which no strain of pride or self-sufficiency was blended. Forgiveness to him was easy. To malignity, in any form or degree, he seems to have been an entire

[1] Knox's *Remains*, vol. iii. pp. 478-9.

stranger. He was often greatly tried and provoked, but he calmly held on his way.

He was compelled sorely against his will to take part in doctrinal controversies, but they were never raised or prolonged by him upon high dogmatic or purely theological grounds. For the most part, his controversial writings were defensive. But whether defensive or otherwise, it was always against practical Antinomianism, breaking out in practice among his Societies, or threatening seriously to infect them, that he found himself constrained to descend into the controversial arena. And in his controversy he never returned railing for railing, or invective for invective. His own evangelical theology, indeed, was strictly defined, but the faith of which he spoke and wrote was always "the faith which works by love and purifies the soul." He was in truth one of the most catholic of men. He thought little of doctrinal differences where there was the unity of Christian love in the heart. His beautiful sermon on a "catholic spirit" exemplifies his own true spirit and uniform practice. One of the griefs of his life was the difference, and, for a while, controversy, between Whitefield and himself in regard to the questions of election and predestination; but the two great evangelists were not very long in agreeing to differ; they loved each other warmly. Whitefield appointed Wesley his executor, and Wesley preached his funeral sermon.

The great trial of his life, and one that lasted for thirty years, was undoubtedly his ill-advised marriage to a vain and vindictive woman who was altogether unworthy of him; but even in regard to this his saying of himself was true: "I feel and I grieve, but by the

grace of God I never fret." Well known as the incident is, I do not like to omit in this connection a reference to perhaps the most grievous wrong which his wife inflicted on him, and the manner in which he received and endured it. Mr. Tyerman gives an account of it in his third volume (p. 233). A number of his letters had been stolen by his wife. She had interlined, falsified, forged names, made the letters bear a vile construction, and sent them to the *Morning Post*. When they came out in that paper, Wesley had arranged to start the next morning for Canterbury, where he had to preach, and to take his niece, Sarah Wesley, with him. Miss Wesley has described the interview between her father, Charles Wesley, and his brother in her father's own words.

"I shall never forget," said Miss Wesley, "the manner in which my father accosted my mother on his return. 'My brother,' said he, 'is indeed an extraordinary man. I placed before him the importance of the character of a minister, and the evil consequences which might result from his indifference to it, and urged him, by every relative and public motive, to answer for himself, and stop the publication. His reply was, Brother, when I devoted to God my ease, my time, my life, did I except my reputation? No. Tell Sally I will take her to Canterbury to-morrow.'"[1]

[1] Mr. Wesley was married by his brother Charles to Mrs. Vazeille, a merchant's widow, in 1751; she died in 1781.

CHAPTER III.

WESLEY'S LATER LIFE AND LAST DAYS.

TILL within a few years of his death it might almost have seemed as if Wesley had no old age, but only a protracted youth. At the age of eighty he was far more active and capable of enduring toil and travelling than most young men. The buoyancy of his spirits at the same time was remarkable. I quote from Mr. Tyerman's Life the following passage in illustration of what I have just said: "Wesley himself, according to his own correspondence, seemed to grow younger as he grew older. In a letter to the Rev. Walter Sellon, dated London, January 10th, 1784, he writes, 'On the 28th of last June I finished my eightieth year. When I was young I had weak eyes, trembling hands, and an abundance of infirmities, but, by the blessing of God, I have outlived them all. I have no infirmities now, but what I judge to be inseparable from flesh and blood. This hath God wrought! I am afraid you want the grand medicine which I use—exercise and change of air.'"[1]

In one thing, however, the experiences of life had made a change in him. His judgments were more indulgent, both as to himself and as to others, in his later than in his earlier years. There are three of

[1] Tyerman's *Wesley*, vol. iii. p. 408.

the sermons of his later life which will serve to illustrate what I have just said. I refer to Sermons 106 on "Faith," and 110 on "The Discoveries of Faith," in which he describes those who, though not "sons," are yet "servants" of Christ; and to Sermon 89, entitled "The More Excellent Way;"—sermons which are remarkable for the mild liberality with which he judges those imperfect but sincere Christians, who had not attained to the strict standard of devotion and the full assurance of faith which he regarded as proper to the complete character of a "man in Christ Jesus." The notes also which he inserted in the later editions of his Journals, relating to the account of his own religious character and experience given by himself about the time of his conversion, show how the severity of his standard in regard to religious character and experience had been softened. Perhaps his illness in 1751, when he seemed to be dying of a consumption, and had for some months to keep his house and often his room at Bristol, and during which time he wrote his *Notes on the New Testament* and reviewed his life, may have helped somewhat to modify the tone of his judgment in regard to points of personal religious attainment. As the years went on he seems to have become increasingly gentle, lively and sunny, and he was more and more the delight of all the circles that he visited.

On Sunday morning, March 4th, 1787, when he was in his eighty-fifth year, he conducted a service at Plymouth, which lasted from half-past nine till nearly one o'clock; and in the evening the throng was such, that, in order to reach the pulpit, he was literally lifted over the people's heads. At five o'clock the

next morning the house was again crowded, and at six he left by coach for Exeter, to which city he travelled through a continuous rain, and again preached "to as many as could possibly squeeze" into the chapel; and says, "I know not that I ever saw such an impression made on the people of Exeter before."

In 1783, when he was eighty years of age, he had enjoyed for the first time (to use Mr. Tyerman's phrase) "the luxury of a ministerial holiday." He went to Holland with three of his closest friends among the ministers, and he went partly at least for relaxation, though, never losing sight of the great end of his life, he took the journey also, as Mr. Henry Moore says, "that he might indulge and enlarge his catholic spirit by forming an acquaintance with the truly pious of other nations." On this visit ministers of religion welcomed him, and persons of high rank showed him honour.

At Rotterdam he preached twice in the Episcopal Church to large congregations. At the Hague, in the house of a lady of high rank, he expounded part of the 13th chapter of the 1st of Corinthians to a company of ladies and military men. He visited some Moravian congregations, spending part of his eightieth birthday at a Moravian children's love-feast. His seventeen days' visit was one of the pleasantest and most refreshing passages in his long life.

His days of persecution were over; honours came thickly upon him wherever he went. At Whitehaven, in 1784, he had all the Church ministers to hear him, and most of the gentry in the town, of whom he says, "That they all behaved with as much decency as if they had been colliers." The once proscribed and

reviled evangelist had come to be the object of almost universal honour. The churches which had been shut against him for nearly half a century were now opened on every hand. Bishops paid him reverence. Clergy flocked to hear him, and to take part with him in administering the Lord's Supper.

The great charm of his old age was its happiness and goodness. Alexander Knox has furnished a description which forms a fine counterpart to Mr. Gambold's picture of him at Oxford as he was fifty years before. "It would be far too little to say," writes Mr. Knox, "that it was impossible to suspect him of any moral taint, for it was obvious that every movement bespoke as perfect a contrariety to all that was earthly or animal as could be imagined in a mortal being. His countenance, as well as conversation, expressed an habitual gaiety of heart which nothing but conscious virtue and innocence could have bestowed. My acquaintance with him has done more to teach me what heaven upon earth is implied in the maturity of Christian piety than all that I have elsewhere seen or heard or read, except in the sacred volume." It is no wonder that such a man was welcomed among the pure and good of all ages and of every circle, or that children especially loved and delighted in him, as he loved and delighted in them.

Tender and intense philanthropy, care for the poor and needy, was as striking a characteristic of Wesley as love for the good and pure, and for children. He seems, in the years of terrible poverty and distress which followed the war with the American colonists, and preceded the miseries that came upon Europe during the Revolutionary period, to have made it his

custom, at the opening of the New Year, to give himself personally to the toilsome work of collecting money to relieve the distress, of which so much came to his knowledge, both within and beyond his own Societies, and which, even then, seems to have abounded most, and in its most extreme form, in the neighbourhood of Bethnal Green. Thus in 1787, when he was verging on eighty-four, he gave the first five days of the year to walking through London, street by street, to collect subscriptions for such relief. Hard winter toil for the aged saint! Severe but blessed task work! Heavenly example! Christ-like self-sacrifice!

During the last six years of his life, however, Wesley gradually began to show signs of growing weakness and some of the infirmities of old age, though he kept up his travelling and preaching almost to the last.

In 1789, less than two years before his death, he paid his last visit to Ireland. One instance may show how he was received in the homes of the people. When he was about to leave a house where he had stayed, "one and another," he says, "fell on their knees all round me, and most of them burst out into tears and earnest cries, the like of which I have seldom heard, so that we scarce knew how to part." Though suffering much now and again, on his return to England, from the thirst and fever of constitutional decay, he continued his customary task of journeying from province to province. A month after leaving Ireland he was visiting Cornwall, and in the following spring (1790) he took his last northern journey, in the course of which at Newcastle he preached to the children in the Sunday school, according to

his common custom, a sermon which, to quote Mr. Atmore's words, "was literally composed and delivered in words of not more than two syllables." This was a remarkable test of the mental vigour and freshness still remaining in the aged man of eighty-seven years. It is also one out of many instances of the love for the little ones which made the heavenly looking ancient man, with silvery locks, such an object of wonder and delight to all the children who came near him. Later in the same year, 1790, he visited the eastern counties. Crabbe, the poet, heard him at Lowestoft, and was struck, not only by his venerable appearance, but by the way in which he quoted Anacreon's lines with an application to himself:—

"Oft am I by woman told,
'Poor Anacreon! thou growest old;
See, thine hairs are falling all;
Poor Anacreon! how they fall!'
Whether I grow old or no,
By these signs I do not know;
But this I need not to be told,
'Tis time to *live*, if I grow old."

On the same journey he preached at Lynn, where every clergyman in the town was in his congregation except one who was lame.

In these last days people gazed on Wesley with veneration as he passed through the streets. He returned their friendly greetings in the words of his favourite apostle, "Little children, love one another." At every place he visited he gave the Society his last advice "to love as brethren; fear God, and honour the king." He generally closed these touching services with the verse which he gave out so often in

the family circle at the preacher's house in City Road:—

> "O that, without a lingering groan,
> I may the welcome word receive,
> My body with my charge lay down,
> And cease at once to work and live."

He had intended to take his usual journey to the north in the spring of 1791, but was unable to carry out his intention. His feebleness increased upon him. He preached for the last time in City Road Chapel, on Tuesday, February 22nd, and next day he preached at Leatherhead his last sermon. On Thursday, the 24th, he wrote his last letter—the well-known letter to Wilberforce as to the horrors of slavery. On the Friday he returned to the City Road house to die. His death was in harmony with his life. "The best of all, God is with us," were almost his last words. The last hymn that he sung, and tried once again to sing, when very near his end, was the one which begins,—

> "I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
> And when my voice is lost in death,
> Praise shall employ my nobler powers;
> My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
> While life, and thought, and being last,
> Or immortality endures."

He died on March 2nd, 1791, being eighty-seven years old. His last word was a simple "Farewell," addressed to his old companion, Joseph Bradford, one of his most loved and best trusted preachers.

PART V

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

THE PROGRESS OF UNIVERSAL METHODISM DURING THE CENTURY SINCE THE DEATH OF WESLEY.

IN the year of Wesley's death, there were in England about 79,000 members of Society, and 312 ministers employed in Circuits, mostly of very wide extent, covering a large part of England and Ireland, as well as some part of Scotland.

In America generally, including what are now the United States and a few outlying posts in Canada, the number of members was between forty and fifty thousand.

The growth and progress of Methodism in America after Wesley's death was simpler, swifter, and more sweeping than in England, for reasons which will presently appear. The Methodist Church there had already for some years been an independent organisation, owning no allegiance to any hierarchical or religious communion whatever. When the colonies achieved their independence, it was necessary for Wesley to organise absolute independence for the Methodism of the now independent States. The vast

fields of American territory were for the most part absolutely unoccupied by any religious organisation. Only in New England were they powerfully dominated by any Church. There the Calvinistic Congregationalists (or Congregationalised Presbyterians) were established in the strictest and hardest sense, and, at the time of Wesley's death, the Methodists could scarcely be said to have even begun to make a lodgment in that part of the United States. But, with this exception, and with the partial exception of New York, the whole territory lay freely open to occupation and evangelisation. The Church of England, at this period, was all but extinguished in the States. There was a great call for Methodism to do its work. There was nothing to hamper it in doing that work. Wesley accordingly ordained Coke and Asbury in the year 1784, to the episcopal office (which, however, he preferred to call the office of *Superintendent*), by which was given to them a power of initiative, and a kind and degree of authority, very closely resembling what had been exercised by Wesley himself in England. It is no wonder that, starting without a rival in its own kind, as an itinerant evangelising agency, in a new and boundless territory which rapidly expanded from year to year, the Methodism of Wesley should have very speedily attained, in the United States, a pre-eminent position such as Methodism in England could not hope to attain; should have become, in fact, over the vast area of the North American continent, by far the most powerful and widely diffused of evangelical organisations. Into the New England section of States, Methodism entered comparatively late, and it only forced its way slowly and with great difficulty;

for that section of the Union was full of anti-Wesleyan, anti-Methodist, ideas and prejudices, being the stronghold of Calvinistic Congregationalism. But the character and development of American Methodism were formed and determined among the solitary homesteads, the lonely hamlets, the forest trysting-places, where the adventurous Methodist rider—the itinerant with his saddle-bags—found his way, and where often he was the only visitor from the world of social intercourse and general intelligence that ever reached spots so sequestered. To cope with the necessary work of evangelising such a sphere of labour, with adequate force and rapidity, it was necessary, not only to have itinerant bishops who made the whole of the colonies their episcopal circuit, but under them to have a sub-episcopal order, whose labours were confined within appointed limits, vast, indeed, but sufficiently defined. These ministers were called Presiding Elders. In the Methodism of the United States, they corresponded in general character and functions, as nearly as circumstances allowed, to Wesley's assistants, after his death called Superintendents, in English Methodism. But while English circuits were very wide, the American districts, for which the presiding elders directed the evangelical forces, were vastly wider. These presiding elders were lieutenants, acting under the bishops, but they were lieutenant-generals who, in their command, might be guided, but were scarcely fettered, by the authority of their episcopal chiefs. Within the districts of the presiding elders, subordinate ministers, each with his own special but still extensive sphere of labour, were stationed. They were called Elders—simple elders—or, if not yet ordained, Deacons.

Such, in rough outline, was the picture of American Methodism, as it was already taking form when Wesley died; and, upon the foundation here slightly sketched, the Methodist Church of the States has been built up. Pastoral authority has always been a great and leading feature of American Methodism, much more so than of English Methodism. This has arisen naturally out of the fact that, under such conditions as I have described, only the extraordinary energy of devoted itinerant pastors and preachers could have effected the establishment throughout the States of the evangelising work and life of the Methodist Church. If, for a considerable period, American Methodism had been confined within narrow limits around Baltimore and Philadelphia—towns of considerable size, in which it early obtained a powerful footing—and thence had worked its way, by comparatively slow degrees, wherever fair-sized towns were established with a fringe of townships or hamlets around them, it might have developed in a way more nearly resembling the development of Methodism in England. There would then have been leaders' meetings, watching over concentrated Societies; and there would have been quarterly meetings of the Circuits, in which meetings, under the presidency of the elder or minister, the leaders of the Societies and the stewards of the leaders' meeting would have formed the chief constituent elements. But the rate at which, through the forest, over the mountains, across the prairie, the "saddle-bags" of the pioneer preacher followed the "rifle and axe" of the settler, fixed another law of development for the Church. The ubiquitous bishop, whose flight was wonderfully swift, and whose movements, made as he liked, were so

mysterious, whose visits were welcomed as those of a celestial guide and teacher, and the daring, devoted, heroic presiding elder, whose work and whose qualities made him an absolute leader and disciplinarian,—these carried Methodism over the whole land, and what, under Providence, they thus created and were still creating, the people looked to them and no others to rule and preserve. Among a simple and primitive people this practical economy was the only one possible. American Methodism thus became a system of evangelising agencies, largely worked, indeed, by class-leaders, exhorters, and prayer-leaders, and other lay-helpers, but throughout guided, animated, inspired, sustained, by an itinerant preaching pastorate, under the government of itinerant bishops and presiding elders. Hence when, towards the end of the decade which began with 1860, public attention at length woke up widely to the wonderful spectacle of a vast Church in the American Republic, entirely and all but absolutely governed by its clergy, there was, for those who believed strongly in lay rights, plenty of ground for criticism.

I have already intimated that Methodism experienced a difficulty in making its way in Puritan New England. There English Puritan civilisation, with its principles and prejudices, its theology and its culture, with its Church schools and its denominational colleges, had taken deep and strong hold. Nothing else was tolerated for the most part throughout that region. After the process of disestablishment in the States was completed, some sixty years ago, Methodism began to make much more rapid progress in the North-Eastern States than it had done before, though

doubtless, during the antecedent period, its labours and aggressive evangelism had had much to do in accelerating the process of disestablishment, so that poll-tax and property-tax should no longer be exacted from all the population towards the support of the Congregational clergy and their churches. But even of recent years the progress of Methodism in that part of the Union has not been among the old families of the oldest States, but, for the most part, among the more recent deposits of population. Neither has Methodism ever held a leading position in New York, where the Presbyterians, including the Dutch Reformed, hold a high place; nor in Brooklyn, the sister city of New York, where the Congregationalists, having come over to Long Island from New England, are most powerful. But in Philadelphia, Methodism holds a very strong position, and in Baltimore it is, I believe, the most powerful Protestant denomination. Its great conquests, however, have from the first been among the new settlers that have filled up region after region towards the west and south, and recently the north-west. One reason of the great hold it has taken on Philadelphia, is the fact that Philadelphia was the gateway leading to the Alleghanies and to Ohio, and all the region which, one hundred years ago, was for American settlers the great Far West—the region of forests and mountains and prairies and Indians. Of Baltimore it took hold, because there and throughout the colony, of which Baltimore was the chief city, and where the English Episcopal Church had a powerful hold before the Revolutionary War, Methodism stepped into the place of the Church of England, during and after the War of Independence, and Methodists ministered to

the flocks from which the English clergy (a Loyalist clergy) had retreated under stress of civil conflict, which they could not but regard as rebellion—so becoming rebels themselves to the victorious Federalist government. Methodism in that way became the leading Church in Maryland; and, because of its missionary genius and spirit, speedily spread far away down south and south-west. But Philadelphia and Baltimore were but the narrow and limited frontier and base of a dominion which extended through an immense continental interior, much more apparently vast a hundred or even fifty years ago, and extending into regions far more apparently remote, because far more inaccessible, than the most distant and least frequented regions of the utmost and newest north-west and Indian border of to-day. Thus Methodism became the religion of the great untracked wilderness first, that it might in after years become the ruling religion of the great States, from the Atlantic to the bases of the Rocky Mountains, which now occupy the area of that once trackless wilderness. The same causes in fact determined the hierarchical form into which American Methodism developed, and also gave it the continental expansion into which it has grown.

To the form of Church government which has now been sketched, American Methodism has proved faithful to this day. Within the last twenty years, however, it has introduced the element of lay representation into its General Conferences, which meet every four years. The Annual Conferences, which carry on the ordinary discipline of the body from year to year, under the guidance of the bishops,

remain purely clerical bodies; and the functions of the presiding elder remain unaltered, at least as yet.

In 1844 the Slavery Controversy brought about a separation between the northern and southern sections of the Church, nearly coincident, geographically, with the line of demarcation between what were at that date the free and the slave-holding States of the Union. There is now, accordingly, a large Methodist Episcopal Church south. The principles, however, on which the two Churches are organised and disciplined remain essentially the same. There are, indeed, no fewer than five different Methodist Episcopal Churches in America, all organised on the same general model, of which three are coloured Churches. Besides these Churches there are non-Episcopal off-shoots from American Methodism, as might naturally be expected, which have been established on the basis of what are claimed as lay rights. The earliest of these is the Protestant Methodist Church, which was founded in 1830, and which in sixty years has very slowly attained to a position of some influence, although its numbers, in comparison of the Episcopal Methodist Churches, are still exceedingly small. The others are inconsiderable.

It seems at first sight a marvellous thing that, in a democratic country like the States, an ecclesiastical constitution so strongly hierarchical as that of American Methodism should have been so very widely accepted. But the causes which have led to it have been partly indicated.

At the opposite extreme is the Baptist denomination; and it is remarkable that this denomination, next to Methodism, should be the most widely diffused throughout the States: the two extreme contrasts, in

other words, find the largest number of adherents. But the two bodies have their resemblances as well as contrasts. Both are homely and popular in their modes of worship and fellowship; both are free and easy in their style, so long, at least, as they dwell and spread in the wilderness, or outside of the largest towns; both have held strong doctrine, and preached it in strong phrases. The Baptist denomination is very heterogeneous, including an exceedingly large variety of congregations gathered on every conceivable principle, and distinguished by an extraordinary variety of different names.

American Methodism holds the central position among the Churches. Less solid and less educated on the whole than the powerful and well-ordered Presbyterian Churches of Scottish or Dutch descent; less scholarly, less philosophical, less refined, but also less latitudinarian than the Congregationalist Communion, which it outnumbers eightfold—it is far more solid, more cultivated, and more disciplined than, speaking generally, the Baptist Churches can be said to be. Methodism has touched the broad heart of the nation, and taken hold of its central classes—its average business men, whether farmers or store-keepers—as no other denomination has; without sweeping as low as the Baptists or the Roman Catholics, it is the most popular Church in the States. The Protestant Episcopal Church, which may be called the Anglo-Episcopal Church of the States, is not congenial, on the whole, to the character of the Republic. It stands very low, numerically, on the list of Churches. It, however, includes elements of culture and refinement which lend it great distinction. Not a few of the

wealthiest men in the States belong to it. It has become exceedingly active and aggressive, putting forth great mission efforts in newly-colonised and sparsely-populated districts. The character and gifts of its leading bishops, and the generosity of its leading laymen, attract to it not a little attention and admiration, especially from English visitors of Episcopalian predilections. The development of High Ritualism, during the last generation, has been its curse; and now a discipline of sectarian exclusiveness is enforced upon its clergy by some, at least, of its synods with a strictness unknown in this country.[1]

I have already hinted at the contrast between the conditions under which Methodism developed in the United States and in this country. Difficulties similar to those which blocked the progress of Methodism in New England were found almost throughout the whole of this country. Our national Church establishment is deep rooted everywhere. Not seldom, also, the influences of a Calvinistic Puritanism, not less prejudiced, not less hard and impenetrable, than any which could be found in New England, have added another element of difficulty. The whole soil is preoccupied. Sometimes it is preoccupied with a tangle of mixed and ancient roots and growth; and often it has been very hard indeed for Methodism to gain any rooting. To this day, such is the case, to an extent little under-

[1] In 1776 eleven different denominations were counted in the American Colonies. The Methodists were at the bottom of the list, with eleven churches and twenty ministers. The four first in order were Congregationalists, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. At the present time the Methodists head the list; and the five next following are Baptists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians.

stood north of the Trent, throughout the southern counties almost from sea to sea, and also in the south-midland counties generally. In these regions Methodism gained scarcely any foot-hold during Wesley's life, except here and there in a mining or manufacturing locality.

When Wesley was taken from the head of his people,—when the great and almost ubiquitous personal force, which had been more and more acknowledged and reverenced for many years, was for ever removed, —the loss was irreparable. For John Wesley there could be no substitute any more than any successor. The news of Wesley's death—though his preachers of course were looking for it—came almost like the shock of a revolution upon both preachers and Societies. How they were to be delivered from confusion and something like chaos was the deep perplexity. To make this state of things worse still, the preachers and Societies were divided into three parties. There was a strong Church of England party, ready to quote Wesley's name for many things that Wesley never intended, and would not have approved; a party, many of whom desired the settlement of the chapels, if it could be so managed, on trustees, with ordained Wesleyan ministers as their clergy, in connection with the Church of England. There was an opposite extreme, composed of radical Dissenters, at that particular period sharing in the intense democratic excitement and enthusiasm which was connected with the earlier stages of the French Revolution. There was a middle class, happily larger than either of the extremes, or than both put together, consisting mostly of plain practical men, with little

regard for Church theories, but no relish for improprieties or democratic excesses in church discipline or congregational life. These desired that, as Wesley had ordained some of his preachers before he died to administer the Sacraments, the process should be continued now that he was gone, and applied on a larger scale, if not in the way of actual ordination by ceremony and consecration, yet, at any rate, by authority given to the ministers generally to administer the Sacraments where the people, including the leaders and trustees, generally desired it. The years of controversy during which these questions were simmering, and occasionally breaking out into paroxysm, were years of great trial to the orphaned Connexion. The wonderful history has often been written, and is now pretty well understood. Wonderful was the wisdom, patience, and practical skill and equity shown in the legislation of the momentous years, 1791–97 The measures then adopted laid the foundation of all the development of Methodism in the following years. Preachers became pastors; the leaders' meetings became church courts for the Societies; quarterly meetings became in effect mixed Circuit Synods; the district meetings—the characteristic new creation of this period, and which were organised in the first Conference following Wesley's death — were Provincial Synods; while over the whole, the Conference, with its President elected year by year, held sway.

The secession of 1796, raised on grounds similar to the American secession of 1830, by which the Protestant Methodist Church was founded in the States, produced very little disturbance, when once the moment of decision came. Six thousand followed

Mr. Kilham into the New Connexion field. Since then the process of organisation in Wesleyan Methodism has been going forward in two directions: the ministers have become a fully-equipped body of clergy, with their training colleges and a formal ordination for the office and work of the ministry, while the correlative official functions and the co-organised influence and partnership of the laity have at the same time been continually developed. The services of the sanctuary, which in Wesley's days, except in the few places where he and his brother Methodist clergymen conducted the liturgical service of the Church of England, were slight and short and informal, bearing the marks of a secondary and supplementary character which had originally belonged to them, gradually became throughout the whole Connexion rich with all that befits the devotional services of a Christian Church —rich not only in free prayer, but especially rich in sacred song and music. Thus Methodism stands now before the public eye of England as a fully-organised and an independent Church of the nation. These steps were not gained without much friction and much controversy. The way to stable settlement lay through such friction and controversy. To have yielded at every turn to the objectors on one side and the other would have involved greater friction, worse controversy, together with a fatal result. One of the secessions grew out of what was called the "organ question," rather more than sixty years ago. Another took for its pretext the proposal to provide theological education and pastoral training for the ministry. The last, a very great and lamentable secession, was one which grew out of a schism, kindled originally upon purely

personal grounds, but which absorbed into itself and rekindled the smouldering remains of former agitations. It is not for me in this sketch to describe these agitations, least of all the last. The history is one to be read with deepest sorrow. Doubtless, also, it has its lessons, to be well pondered and to be made use of in the future.

But, besides the Churches which arose out of what may be called formal secessions, there are two that grew in each instance out of local zeal, which refused to be guided or limited by discipline. These zealous and useful bodies are now known as the *Primitive Methodists* and the *Bible Christians*, the former having sprung up among the excitable potters and colliers of Staffordshire, some twenty years or more after the death of Wesley, and the latter among the still more excitable inhabitants of the border ground on the confines of Cornwall and Devonshire, some ten years later. Between them and the parent body there has, for the most part, been a friendly understanding. Such outbreaks of individualism in Churches—for good as well as sometimes for evil—are sure to take place, and no wisdom or generosity of administration could avail to prevent them. These two instances would seem to have been providentially overruled.

If we look at Methodism now in England, with all the bodies that have arisen out of it in the manner that has just been indicated, we find that the same general principles of doctrine, though in the case of some of the smaller bodies hardly held with the same strictness or tenacity or formal security as in the parent body, form the substance of the teaching throughout all its Churches or Societies.

Evangelical Arminianism is the doctrine of all the Methodist bodies. In all of them, also, the principle of experimental and oral church fellowship is enshrined at the centre of the organisation, although, as regards the two principal secessions to which I have referred, the authority of the class-meeting has not been maintained with the same sacredness as in the parent body. Nevertheless, with whatever variations or deductions, the various Methodist bodies, collectively, may be said to represent throughout the country the doctrinal principles and spiritual fellowship characteristic of Wesley's Societies. They may thus be regarded as combining to represent in the life of the people the great features of Wesley's ecclesiastical creation. Those of them in whose constitution and connexional fabric democratic principles, with a distinct political colouring, are intermingled, find access, on this very account, to a class of persons who do not know how to distinguish between strongly held political principles and moral or religious convictions. On the other hand, those who prefer a politically neutral Church, where they may find rest at least within the sanctuary borders from the echo and from the spirit of political dispute and animosity, will continue to prefer the older body, especially with its highly-developed recent organisation, including as that does both ministerial and lay agency, with mutual counsel and joint authority, and providing as it does for high ministerial training and culture. Considering the difficulties under which the work of Methodism in England has had to be prosecuted for these one hundred years, difficulties at which I have but very slightly glanced, and the contrasted advan-

tages and facilities which have favoured the progress of Methodism in the United States, there seems no reason for doubting that the work accomplished in this country has in proportion been as great as that accomplished in the United States.

In Canada there were different varieties of Methodism, including samples of almost every kind known either in the States or in England, from Episcopal Methodism of American descent to the Bible Christian Connexion. These bodies have all found the way, during the last few years, to unite in one Connexion and on a common basis, which seems to approach almost nearer to the Episcopal Methodism of the United States than to any other form of Methodism, and which may be presumed to be peculiarly adapted to the requirements of that vast territory and young empire which is known as the Dominion of Canada.

The Methodist mother Church in England has, of course, extended through the English Colonies. In Australasia and Polynesia the Mission Churches became administratively independent thirty-five years ago, under an affiliated Colonial Conference. For ten years past the Australasian Conference has been financially as well as ecclesiastically quite independent of the mother Church. The powers of the English Yearly Conference, in regard to Connexional property in Australasia and Polynesia, to the appointment of ministers, and to legislation and discipline, were transferred to the Australasian Conference under the sanction and powers of an Act of the British Parliament.

The Australasian Connexion has now for some years past been under the government of a General

Conference, which meets once in three years, and of four Annual Conferences: one centred in New South Wales; a second for Victoria and Tasmania; a third for South Australia; and a fourth for New Zealand. The constitution and order of the Conferences are in general agreement with the English model.

In Southern Africa, including the English Colonies and some portion of the territory beyond their limits, the Mission Churches were in 1882 constituted into a Connexion under an Affiliated Conference, with a considerable annual grant from the Foreign Missionary Fund of the mother Church, which, however, is, during a course of years, being gradually reduced. Similar arrangements were made in 1884 in regard to the Methodist Churches in the West Indies, which are placed under an Affiliated General Conference and two Annual Conferences.

Methodism in France has always been feeble in numbers, though its operation as a spiritual force among the French people has been most helpful in quickening French Protestantism during the last sixty years into some degree of evangelical life. There has been an Affiliated French Methodist Conference since 1852, which remains largely dependent on English Missionary Funds. In France, however, it should be added, English Methodism has also its own distinctly organised evangelising agencies under a General Superintendent.

The parent Church has missions in Continental India, Ceylon, and China, in Southern and Western Africa, in the Bahamas, in British Honduras, and other parts of the South American Continent, in Germany, Italy, and France.

The following table, taken from the *Wesleyan Methodist Kalendar* for 1891, gives a summary of the statistics of Wesleyan Methodism at home and abroad :—

STATISTICS OF WESLEYAN METHODISM.

	Ministers.	Members, including those on Trial.
Great Britain	2,004	512,440
Ireland	232	25,976
Foreign Missions	366	39,144
French Conference	36	1,504
South African Conference	171	43,510
West Indian Conferences	90	48,378
Australasian Conferences	618	89,206
	3,517	760,158
To these may fitly be added the numbers for the Methodist Church in Canada	1,588	227,034
	5,105	987,192

The following are the corresponding numbers for the two Methodist Churches which, though what may be regarded as irregular offshoots from Wesleyan Methodism, were not in the nature of hostile secessions :—

Primitive Methodists (at home and abroad)	1,049	193,658
Bible Christians (at home and abroad)	271	32,335

Of the Methodist bodies which originated in distinct secessions from the parent Connexion, the following statistics are given :—

Methodist New Connexion (at home and abroad)	202	35,775
United Methodist Free Church (at home and abroad)	417	85,461
Wesleyan Reform Union (at home and abroad)	19	8,096

The Methodist Churches of the United States are conveniently divided into two classes: the Episcopal Churches, all of which have substantially the same government by means of bishops and presiding elders; and the Non-Episcopal Churches, which, for what may be described as democratic ecclesiastical reasons, have rejected Episcopacy. The Protestant Methodist Church, already referred to, is by far the largest of these, counting more than one-half of the total number of members in this class.

Episcopal Churches.	Ministers.	Members, including those on Trial.
Methodist Episcopal Church	15,095	2,237,526
Methodist Episcopal Church (South)	4,687	1,132,480
African Methodist Episcopal Church.	2,550	405,000
African Methodist Episcopal Church (Zion Church)	2,110	314,000
Coloured Methodist Episcopal Church of America	1,729	165,000
Evangelical Association	1,187	145,703
United Brethren Church,	1,566	195,278
	28,924	4,594,987
Non-Episcopal Churches	4,072	201,264[1]

As respects the American Methodist Churches, it is proper to observe that the slavery question, in one or other form, has been the cause of the divisions indicated by the first five lines in the above statistics—the distinctions in discipline amongst all the five Churches being comparatively insignificant. There has been a good deal of discussion on the subject of re-union between the Church South and the parent body, but as yet this question does not seem to ripen. In the meantime it cannot be doubted that the divisions

[1] These figures are taken partly from the *American Methodist Year-Book* for 1890, and partly from the *Wesleyan Methodist Kalendar*, 1891.

enumerated above have been more conducive to real Christian unity of feeling and mutual fraternal relations than any forced organic union could have been. Most of the denominations in question cultivate a mutual interchange of deputations and salutations on the occasion of their great Conferential gatherings, and I am not aware that between any of them there is any unfriendly feeling.

Various estimates have been made as to the total mass of the world's population gathered into connection with Christian worship and organisations, which may be regarded as standing in definite relation with these various branches or offshoots of the Methodist family of Churches. On the whole, I think it better to attempt no estimate myself. If Sunday-school children had been included, the general total would have been enormously increased, there being, in connection with the British Wesleyan Methodist Church alone, no fewer than 932,888, of whom, however, a considerable proportion are Church members. Probably it might be reasonable to multiply the number of Church members in Wesleyan Methodism by from four to five in estimating the total household population connected with the Church. The Wesleyan Methodist rule as to membership is very strict, and therefore in proportion to the number of communicants the total number of the population connected with the Church, including children and household dependents, would be a larger multiple than in the case of less strict Churches —as, for example, the Church of England. The rule of Methodist membership in the United States is less strict than in England; a fact which, whilst it undoubtedly contributes to the nominal increase of American Method-

ism from year to year, has not contributed to the increase of spiritual life or the strengthening of moral power. The largest Church in a great country, which holds the central commercial position in the nation, tends to increase in the number of its nominal adherents, for reasons other than those merely of spiritual conviction and growth. To be connected with such a Church—especially in a church-going country—yields a distinct advantage, when regarded from a secular point of view. Nevertheless, though American Methodism may be laxer than English Methodism in the respect referred to, it is still beyond question more strict in regard to its conditions of membership than the Anglo-Episcopal communion of Churches on either side of the Atlantic. Taking all points into fair consideration, there is sufficient ground for concluding that the Methodist Churches of the world represent a larger aggregate of Christian organisation than the Churches of any other Protestant denomination. How far their spiritual power to-day, on the whole, may be regarded as proportionately equal to the spiritual power of Methodism on both sides of the Atlantic fifty years ago, is a difficult and serious question as to which I shall not hazard any opinion.

As regards Wesleyan Methodism, however, in particular, there are some special features of its modern development so conspicuous and important, that it seems proper, even in a slight and summary view such as the present, to make some reference to them.

Modern Methodism is proving itself, at least in one respect, to be increasingly inspired by the primary impulse of its founder, to mission and reclaim the most spiritually needy and neglected of the population.

For Home Mission work, English Methodism appears to have received, during the last twenty years, a fresh baptism. Extraordinary zeal and enterprise and generosity have marked the recent developments of its work in this department of Christian service. The fame of its great and comprehensive Home Mission work in London has reached the ends of the earth. Not only in London, however, but in most of the great towns of England, and especially in Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, similar work is being carried on with no less energy and zeal, and with at least equal success. Not less remarkable—though less known and perhaps even more difficult—is the work of evangelising the spiritually dark and exceptionally poor stretches of rural England into which Wesley and his fellow-workers were unable to extend their evangelistic labours. Alike in the great towns and in the more and more sparsely populated rural regions of England, modern Methodism, under changed conditions, which have greatly enhanced the difficulties of the work, is filling up the measure of its founder's grand missionary inspiration, by means of men of zeal and devotion not unworthy to be compared with the early Methodist itinerants. Together with this mission work, social agencies of religious rescue for society's lost ones, and for childhood's hapless waifs and strays, have also been set in operation, and are enlisting, to an encouraging extent, the sympathy and co-operation alike of the mature who have zeal and wisdom to guide, and of young converts who give their fresh energies, their leisure, and no little of their worldly means to this eminently Christian work. These are exceedingly hopeful signs in con-

nection with modern Methodism in England, and show that the spirit and sympathy of Wesley survive in the hearts of the Methodist people of to-day.

In America a similar spirit has shown itself very generously, in the provision of homes for the widowed and destitute among members of the Church, and orphanages for children. In the younger country, however, the special needs and difficulties of Old England have not yet attained to what may be regarded as an acute stage of development. Accordingly, such Home Missionary and social efforts and enterprises as those I have referred to have scarcely, as yet, begun to be developed in Transatlantic any more than in Colonial Methodism.

There is a further point which I should name as a characteristic feature of the English Methodism of to-day. I refer to the remarkable intellectual development of the last twenty or thirty years. In former generations, Methodism, in comparison with other forms of English Nonconformity—not to speak of the Established Church—was confessedly wanting in respect of cultivated intellectual power on the part of its ministers. That is no longer the case. It would be invidious to mention names, but it may be said that alike in theology, philosophy, Biblical exegesis, Christian apologetics, and general literature, Methodism can show an array of superior writers, whose name and reputation are coming to be recognised by Christian students of all Churches. Several also of the ministers of Methodism have proved themselves to possess uncommon gifts, not only as preachers but as sermon writers. It is not an insignificant fact that the one Nonconformist *Quarterly Review*, of the

highest class, and competent to deal with the great Christian and social questions of the day, is published at the Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, and sustained chiefly by a staff of Wesleyan Methodist writers.[1] The large Connexional staff of tutors and professors, which is distributed over the different theological and other colleges of the Connexion, including the Leys School, under the head-mastership of the present learned and distinguished President of the Conference, shows an aggregate of cultivated intellectual power, in all that belongs to the learning necessary to a Christian Church, such as may well compare with the College Faculties of other Churches.

In a Centenary Volume, like the present, such statements as the foregoing, I venture to think, may well be regarded as not unbecoming, but as even called for by the occasion.

I close this chapter and this volume by setting down a statement, the truth of which, in view of all that has now been set forth, will hardly be questioned. With whatever abatements, and notwithstanding all imperfections, the Methodism of the world stands out in this Centenary year of Wesley's death, as incomparably the most wonderful result which the world's history has shown as arising from the labours of any Christian leader, at least since the time of Luther.

[1] The *London Quarterly Review*.

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